Dissertation

Post-Soviet Transnational Urban Communities:
Odessites, Petersburgers and Bakuvians at Home and Abroad

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ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Die Dissertationsarbeit ist der Erforschung des Phänomens der Transformation der urbanen und lokalen Identität im Rahmen des Migrationsprozesses nach dem Zerfall der Sowjetunion gewidmet. Eine erhebliche Migrationswelle russischsprachiger Migrant*innen aus postsowjetischen Städten hat sich in den europäischen Ländern niedergelassen. Die Forschung wurde auf drei Ebenen und in vier Städten durchgeführt (Berlin, Sankt-Petersburg, Odessa und Baku).

1. Einer der wichtigsten Fokusse der Forschung ist die vergleichende Geschichte der Entwicklung der drei Städte – Sankt-Petersburg (Russland), Odessa (Ukraine) und Baku (Aserbaidschan), die als Räume im Kontext urbaner Gesellschaft und Habitus konstruiert wurden. Diese drei Städte haben verschiedene, aber auch besondere Rollen in der Geschichte des Russischen Reichs und der Sowjetunion gespielt. Der wichtigste geschichtliche Zeitraum ist mit der Europäisierung des Russischen Reichs verbunden. Es sind nämlich diese vier ausgewählten Städte, in denen die Deutschen eine wichtige Rolle spielten (ebenso wie die Franzosen, Italiener und andere Einwanderer europäischer Länder), die zu verschiedenen Zeiten s die größten Stätten dieses Prozesses wurden. Dieser Faktor bestimmt weitgehend die Spezifität des urbanen Habitus (Lebensraum).

2. Der zweite Fokus liegt auf der urbanen Gesellschaft der Bürger*innen Sank-Petersburgs, Odessas und Bakus. Zur Zeit hat die jeweilige Gesellschaft in ihren Heimatstädten, nachdem sie massive Auswanderungen und den Zustrom von Menschen aus anderen Städten oder ruralen Räumen erlebt hat, einen Teil ihres Einflusses sowie ihrer dominanten Position verloren. Aber in diesem Kontext der Verluste, haben die Mitglieder der urbanen Gesellschaft, auch durch die rasante Entwicklung der digitalen Kommunikation die Möglichkeit erhalten, transnationale Netzwerke zu entwickeln. Institutionen, die eine besondere Rolle bei der Schaffung solcher Netzwerke spielten, sind zu städtischen Clubs geworden, die 1990-1991 in St. Petersburg, Odessa und Baku gegründet wurden. Die Spezifität der Gesellschaft und des urbanen Habitus wurde parallel zum Studium der städtischen Klubs untersucht.

3. Der dritte wichtige Fokus liegt auf den sozialen Netzwerken der Bürger*innen von St. Petersburg, Odessa und Baku in Deutschland, u.a. in Berlin. Sowie auf der Institution – „Urban Clubs“, die von Aktivist*innen der urbanen Gesellschaft im Rahmen der Jüdischen Gemeinde Berlin, Anfang der 2000er gegründet wurden. Die Praxis der Netzwerk- und Vereinsgründung ermöglicht es Migrant*innen, auf symbolische Weise ihre gewohnten Lebensbedingungen zu rekonstruieren und bestimmt so die Besonderheit ihrer Integration in die deutsche Aufnahmegesellschaft. Eine solche Studie erlaubt es, die innere Vielfalt einer sich als „russischsprachige Juden“ definierenden Gruppe zu beschreiben. Zusätzlich trägt sie auch dazu bei, die Diskussion über die Prinzipien der Integrationspolitik in Deutschland anzuregen.

ABSTRACT

This dissertation is devoted to the study of the transformation of urban local identity in the context of migration processes after the collapse of the USSR. The study was conducted in four cities and countries, and it may be outlined, as follows, by its three most important areas of focus.

1. It offers a comparative history of the development of St Petersburg (Russia), Odessa (Ukraine) and Baku (Azerbaijan) as socio-cultural spaces, within which urban communities were created and urban habitus was designed. All three cities played distinctive and influential roles in the history of the Russian Empire and later in the USSR. The most important period in their history is connected with Europeanisation of the Russian Empire. These cities, at different times, became the largest hearths of this process, in which Germans (as well as the French, Italians and residents of other European countries) moved to St Petersburg, Odessa and Baku in the 18-19th centuries. This history largely determines the specificity of the cities' urban habitus, respectively.

2. Research is focused on the urban communities of Petersburgers, Odessites and Bakuvians, which are presently experiencing mass emigration and an influx of population from other cities or rural areas. These communities remaining in their hometowns have lost some influence and status, but in the context of this loss, and due to the rapid development of digital communications, members of these urban communities have also created transnational networks. The city clubs established in St. Petersburg, Odessa and Baku in 1990-1991 have played a special role in creating such networks. Specifics of the communities and their urban habitus have been studied in parallel with the research concerning urban club activities.

3. Social networking practices of members of these urban communities are studied, with focus on immigrants in Germany, and Berlin in particular. Club creation practices allow migrants to symbolically reconstruct familiar living conditions and define the specifics of their integration into the host community (in Germany). Such research makes it possible to describe the internal diversity of the group defined as Russian-speaking Jews, and contributes to discussion about integration policy principles.

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I should add that this book is the culmination of several projects – foremost, the DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service) program, through which I was able to move to Berlin for my thesis work. Five years prior to arriving in the German capital in 2010, I was a fellow of the Scholarship Program for Young Researchers at the Heinrich Boell Foundation's South Caucasus Regional Office, examining the everyday life of Armenians in post-Soviet Baku. For this formative opportunity, which continues to shape my interest in urban communities, I thank Walter Kaufmann and Nino Lejava.

I extend my thanks as well to Viktor Voronkov, the Director of the Independent Sociological Research Center in St. Petersburg, and expert in the Boell Foundation scholarship program. With his help, and with the support of the same Boell Foundation, I was plunged into the City on the Neva for the first time as a researcher, in the spring of 2007. Throughout this research, the CISR St. Petersburg was my second home, and Voronkov was always ready to share his memories of his hometown. And for the chance to closer acquaint myself with the everyday life of Leningraders/Petersburgers in the late Soviet decades – and for her unfailing friendliness and help– I would like to express my deep gratitude to Elena Zdravomyslova.

My research, to a large extent, has been carried out within the walls of the ZWST, the Jewish Community of Berlin, and in the city clubs of Odessa, St. Petersburg and Baku (both in Berlin and the hometowns). For the openness and willingness to share their memories and thoughts with me, I would like to thank the leaders and members of these organizations and clubs: Joseph Vardi, Elmira Ashrafova, Adik Bayramov, Michael Misozhnik, Evgeniya Livschits, Elena Lourie, Semen Aledort, Michael Kom, Leonid Rukman, Olga Orlova. And, of course, I express my deep gratitude to all my interview partners, the many wonderful people whose memories transported me into the fascinating atmosphere of three unique cities, and allowed me to feel a bit like a member of the urban communities of St. Petersburg, Odessa and Baku.

It only remains to dedicate this dissertation to my family. Their support has taken a variety of forms and their faith in me has been an ongoing source of motivation to continue this work.

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INTRODUCTION

Living in modern Baku, I was used to hearing native town dwellers' nostalgic laments that almost no "true" Bakuvians remained, and that the Baku in which they were born, went to school, graduated from universities and established families no longer existed. The daily habitual world of Bakuvians started to collapse in the late 1980s – early 1990s, when thousands of people, united by shared memories and a common urban habitus, left during the collapse of the USSR. Those Bakuvians who refused to emigrate felt increasingly lonely as years passed in the post-Soviet period, while a toponymy of the urban space was quickly nationalized and the social, cultural and architectural landscape of the city underwent rapid reconstruction. As a result, many sites of memory dear to Bakuvians have been gradually destroyed.[1]

In 2007, during my first visit to Berlin, I learned of a club called "Bakinets" (Bakuvian) in the German capital. Upon visiting one of the regular club nights, I was plunged into a similar atmosphere of nostalgia and light sadness, with a sense of déjà vu throughout my first evening in the club. Many of the Bakuvians who gathered there had been living in Berlin for many years. They recalled their hometown, which they do not believe exists anymore— the town of their childhood and youth, which now remains in the memory of emigrants who self-identify as "true" Bakuvians. Guests of the club, emigrants from other post-Soviet towns (Odessa, Leningrad, Kiev, and others) also reflected on their very similar feelings and recollections.

Over the next few days, I considered what I had seen and heard at "Bakinets", wondering why Bakuvians, Odessites or Leningraders,[2] being scattered over several

[1]Afterwards, after my return to Baku, I conducted research on processes of transformation of the socio-cultural landscape of the city and the urban habitus of Bakuvians. Working on the dissertation, I continued my research, some results of which were published in a number of articles (see: Huseynova 2009; Huseynova & Rumyantsev 2011; Huseynova 2012). An interesting analysis of processes of the socio-cultural transformation of Baku's landscape and the community of Bakuvians can also be found in these articles: (Badalov 2001; Rumyantsev 2008; Grant 2010; Darieva 2011).

[2] Below I will analyze in detail the principles of inclusion in urban communities. This is one of the key issues of this study. At the same time, I shall note that the terms Odessites, Leningraders and Bakuvians do not simply define all city dwellers of Odessa, Leningrad and Baku. The terms only refer to "rooted" (korennoi) city dwellers. The rapidly growing population of the towns has always exceeded the number of "true" residents: people who ascribe themselves to urban communities, and are recognized by other members as "rooted" dwellers of Odessa, Leningrad and Baku. These persons are involved, to a different degree, in the process of constructing boundaries, myths and discourses of urban communities. They are

dozen countries, feel like “islanders” united by a common memory of their hometowns. Later, in my field work, time and again I encountered the metaphor of the “island” when my informants tried to describe their way of life in emigration. But it was not until 2010 that I heard an interpretation which satisfied me for the first time. It happened at a Russian-Jewish restaurant in Berlin, at a gathering of about 30 relatives and friends, ethnic Jews, Azeris, Russians and one Armenian. All of them were emigrants from the post-Soviet space, mostly from Baku. The rich feast they had was in the spirit of “Soviet traditions”: vodka was served by the bottle, food was piled high and people danced the night away.

At some point, I caught myself thinking that not a single German song was sung throughout this long evening. Mainly Russian pop songs were sung — lingua franca of the multi-ethnic populations of a number of former big Soviet cities that remained relevant for post-Soviet migrants.[3] However, songs in English, French, and Hebrew were also sung, and even one in Spanish. I couldn’t help asking a man who was seated next to me, a man of about 60 years old, who emigrated from Baku to Berlin in the mid-1990s: why does the repertoire of the singers not include songs in German and why are none of the visitors to the restaurant requesting those songs? The “old Bakuvian” was evidently surprised by my question. He replied: “Songs in German sung at a Jewish restaurant?! This is impossible. Here in Germany, we have everything of our own. Our radio, our television. Our restaurants, shops and schools. We live like on an island,” he explained, laughing.

In very general terms, my research is an attempt to describe such émigré “islands” created by Leningraders / Petersburgers[4], Odessites, and Bakuvians. The concept of the "island" is, of course, no more (but no less) than a metaphor to which migrants themselves resort, emphasizing the uniqueness of the towns of origin and imagined urban communities of which they consider themselves members. Certainly, none of these

united in the communities on the basis of initial and secondary socialization in the same urban space, the memory of everyday life in their native towns and common urban habitus.

[3]See: (Malakhov 2007, p. 165)

[4]I will often use two self-designations at the same time. The simplest explanation is that the city's name has been changed, and, along with it, the name of the communities. But, as will be shown below, this issue is more complicated and is connected with the change of epochs (from imperial to Soviet and post-Soviet). Much depends on the specific of social and cultural contexts in which a narrator tells his or her life story. The vast majority of my informants often use these names as synonyms, which I will often allow myself. At the same time, the simultaneous use of two names often allows emphasizing the differences in urban discourses. Unlike Odessites and Bakuvians, in the case of Leningraders / Petersburgers, the changes of the city’s and community’s name are a constant reminder of the connection and discontinuity of the epochs reflected in one biographical narrative.

communities can be an isolated or internally homogeneous and solidary group of people. On the contrary, the myths and discourses of the uniqueness of the hometowns and the imagined communities of Odessites, Leningraders and Bakuvians are constructed in the broad translocal space of never-ending contacts and close ties with dwellers of other big cities, not only in the post-Soviet space, but also in Western Europe, the USA or Israel.[5] In other words, this study is a search for an answer to the question: why do the Leningraders / Petersburgers, Odessites, and Bakuvians, even after many years of living in emigration, continue to "insist on their right to retain – and worship – their sense on living on an island" (Eriksen 1993: 133-134, 145).

To be more specific, I studied the discourses and myths of the uniqueness of St Petersburg, Odessa and Baku, as well as the specifics of urban habituses of Odessites, Petersburgers and Bakuvians. My research is concerned with urban myths and habitus as resources needed for constructing solidarity discourses. I also studied the discursive and institutional practices of constructing transnational migrant communities whose members are united by common memory of daily life in their hometowns. The transnational and translocal city clubs formed new institutions, created in the aftermath of the fall of the Iron Curtain and the mass emigration that accompanied it. My research is also an attempt to get answers to the question why such clubs, or "islands", are created in the first place. The activities of the city clubs are aimed at popularization of myths about uniqueness of the towns and imagined communities, maintenance of traditional lifestyles in emigration and creation of public spaces intended for familiar communication and collective memories. I ask, what meanings do the founders and activists of city clubs put into their activities?

With this approach, I have– in a way– rejected the tradition of studying migrant and diaspora communities from the perspective of the country of origin and receiving state.[6] This rejection does not imply that I paid little attention to studying the post-Soviet migrants' ideas about their homeland, or to be precise, their homelands. Among my informants, several homelands can be counted. Although they are all natives of the post-Soviet space, they consider the Soviet Union as only one of their homelands. For example,

[5]The majority of emigrants moved specifically to these countries. Besides that, it emphasizes the uniqueness of St Petersburg, Odessa and Baku for the Russian Empire in comparison to other significant cities located in Western Europe (Venice, Genoa, Marseille, Paris, Amsterdam, etc.).

[6]I.e. the approach which is described in a number of influential theoretical works on the problem of a diaspora. (see: Safran 1991; Clifford 1994; Sheffer 2003; Cohen 2008)

for Leningraders the other homeland is Russia; for Odessa natives, it is post-Soviet Ukraine; and for Bakuvians it is the present-day Azerbaijan. Among migrants of Jewish ethnicity, loyalty to their receiving country, Germany, competes with their loyalty to the "historical motherland", Israel. For ethnic Russians who previously resided in Odessa or Baku, present-day Russia is their "historical motherland". However, an emotional connection to their hometowns has far greater attractiveness, strength and significance for my informants than identification with the country of origin or the receiving country, or an imaginary "historical motherland" where they never lived for long or, commonly, where they have never even visited.

Thus, my main thesis can be formulated as follows: for the natives of St Petersburg, Odessa and Baku, hometowns are the "homeland number one". An approach based on this perspective makes me look for answers to questions that are not directly linked to the phenomena of diaspora communities. What is so special about those cities in which imagined urban communities can form, fairly stable in time and space? Why are there relatively few (perhaps, not more than a dozen) towns in the post-Soviet space with natives who, to some extent or another, construct stable urban habituses and transnational networks? In essence, to paraphrase the well-known medieval principle, I had to look for an answer as to how the "air" itself facilitated the formation of stable urban habituses in these cities.[7]

The city clubs were the starting point in my trip around the archipelago of these "islands" set up by migrants from the post-Soviet space. *At the outset of the work, i*t became clear that my research field was much broader and more diverse than I could have presumed. In addition to the "Bakinets" club, Berlin was home to several other institutions of this kind. The club of Odessites was the first of such institutions, followed the city clubs Leningraders, Moscow, Kiev and Dnepr. The leaders and activists of those clubs, along with their regular visitors, create public spaces designed for carrying out collective events to commemorate their hometowns. Symbols and myths of their native cities, a common memory of their daily life, and even the variety of Russian language that members of each of these communities speak are resources for the reconstruction of discursive boundaries in emigration. Certainly, I am far from absolutizing these boundaries and describing them as impenetrable. A variety of contacts and connections

[7]Here I rephrase the medieval principle: "Stadtluft macht frei", See: (Weber 1922, p. 576).

between club members and migrants from different cities have always been and remain quite intense.

But at the same time, the very division into urban communities can tell a lot about the high degree of heterogeneity of the landscape of so-called Russian-speaking migrants from the post-Soviet space.[8] Almost all of these city clubs exist within the framework of the Jewish community of Berlin, which provides them with organizational and financial resources and also premises for club nights and other events. However, despite this fact, the logic of construction and activity of such clubs easily crosses the boundaries of the Jewish community, just as it does in any other ethnic or religious community. More important as a research topic is the study of the phenomenon of the transnational network of city clubs and urban communities; how it crosses boundaries of migration, diaspora and transnationalism studies. Of course, all these theoretical concepts were extremely important in my work, but they are insufficient to understand the specifics of post-Soviet urban migrant communities and networks. The networks of the city clubs and transnational communities, created on the basis of a common memory of daily life in their hometowns, unite people who have different ethnic and religious identities.

That most of these club members and visitors are Jewish speaks to the fact that ethnicity is a very important resource for emigration. Accordingly, to understand the reasons why urban communities and clubs emerge in the first place, one should expand the analytical and conceptual frameworks. It is necessary to address processes of urbanization of the Russian Empire and the USSR, practices of *Biografisierung*[9] of the cities and formation patterns of their socio-cultural landscapes, Soviet national policy, as well as analysis of the specifics of urban habituses of Odessites, Leningraders, and Bakuvians. All these aspects are equally important and only a comprehensive approach allows for exploring the development and results of the transnationalization of imagined urban communities.

In urban myths and discourses, a particularly crucial role is assigned not only to the imperial but also to the Soviet period in the history of the cities, rich with biographies that many contemporary Odessites, Petersburgers, and Bakuvians are still connected to.

[8]About the Russian-speaking migrants in Germany see: (Römhild 1998; Darieva 2004; Hegner 2008; Gromova 2013).
[9] When the history of the city is mythologized and turns into its fate. (Kaschuba 2005).

Most of the members of the city clubs that originally appeared in Odessa, St Petersburg, and Baku[10] at the time of the collapse of the Soviet Union were *middle-aged and older generations*, as well as representatives of intellectual and cultural elites. They were scientists, writers, journalists, artists, and to a lesser degree, city officials, politicians, and businessmen. Membership in the club depends on the social capital and urban habitus of potential candidates, and the ethnic composition reflects the diverse palette of the population of these cities. Among them, there are many ethnic Jews who played a prominent role in the intellectual and cultural elites of the cities in the 20th century. But in contrast to Odessa, the majority of members in clubs based in St Petersburg and Baku are Russians and Azerbaijanis respectively.

As for the Berlin based city clubs, most of their members are Russian-speaking ethnic Jews. Their socialization in the space of major Soviet cities and traditions of emancipation, which rooted themselves among Jews back when the Russian Empire existed, implies a very superficial knowledge of Judaism and national traditions. Researchers have long noted specific components of the identity of this category of Jews. Their traditions and holidays can be characterized as Soviet ones. They speak Russian – the Soviet language. The clubs themselves are institutionally reproduced in Soviet traditions (structurally and symbolically). These specifics of the networks and groups created by Russian- speaking, or Soviet, Jews in emigration can also be clearly seen from the perspective of the attitude towards them from the "other" (non-Soviet) ethnic Jews. The "true Jews", whose upbringing implies a more or less profound knowledge of their traditions and laws, do not recognize the "Soviet Jews". That is, they do not consider them to be Jews. According to one of my informants who lives in Berlin: "In Odessa we were Yids[11], but here we became Russians" (*V Odesse my byli zhidami, a zdes' my stali russkimi*).[12]

However, all these circumstances do not impede their active participation in the activities of the Jewish community. Certainly, practically all of my informants (both Jewish and non-Jewish) most of whom are *middle-aged or olde*r can be called Soviet.

[10] See more below. Here I note that I am talking about the "Worldwide Club of Odessites" (1990), the "Worldwide Club of Petersburgers" (1991) and the International Cultural Society "Bakinets" (1991), created in the cities of origin.

[11] "Yid" is a pejorative designation of ethnic Jews. An interview with Jeniya (woman, 77, Berlin, June 2017).

[12] The situation in which Jeniya ended up is typical for Russian-speaking Jewish migrants from the post-Soviet space in Germany. (Kessler 1996; Hegner 2008; Gromova 2013).

They have lived most of their lives under the Soviet political and educational system. While all of them are united by a largely similar memory of daily life in Soviet cities, they are all, nonetheless, very different Soviet people. Categories like "Russian-speaking Jews" and/or "Soviet Jews" conceal the differences between Jews from Odessa, Leningrad or Baku. All of them speak Russian, but each urban community speaks their own special Russian, not only ethnic Jews but also Russians, Ukrainians, and Azeris who describe themselves as part of those urban communities.

Thus, each of these communities is not reducible to one ethnic group but are rather constructed as "international" and multi-ethnic. In urban discourses and community myths, this is one of the most important characteristics that turns Odessites, Petersburgers and Bakuvians into special people. Insofar as they all participate in Soviet holidays, the celebrations and rituals themselves may vary significantly. Both Odessites and Leningraders, for example, celebrate Victory Day on May 9th. For migrants from these cities it is an important holiday that must be marked, but both groups have their own identification with the war, linked with specific celebrations and mournings. One of the main holidays for the Odessites is April 10th – "Day of the liberation of the city from fascist occupiers". While Odessites' "city day" celebration is seen as very important, this holiday plays no significant role for the Leningraders, since it was regularly celebrated in St Petersburg only in the years of Perestroika. Leningraders commemorate the Blockade (September 1941 – January 1944), but holidays linked to WWII are far less topical for Bakuvians.

Surely, important differences arise between urban communities depending on which Soviet republic they have emigrated from, and the Odessites, Bakuvians, and Leningraders remember their *common* Soviet past in different ways. In order to describe these urban communities, all of the factors listed are important: their common Soviet past, the Russian language and its local features, and their own perception of the relevance of ethnicity in their everyday life, among others. However, the most important factor that defines the specifics of these communities is the town in which members were born and socialized. That is, the specifics of these communities are defined by the characteristics of their native towns and the respective urban habituses of Odessites, Petersburgers and Bakuvians.

"City Day" decorations - flags and banners reading "Vivat Petersburg". Nevsky Prospekt. Petersburg, May 2017. Photo by S. Huseynova

Urbanization was slow in the Russian Empire, but Odessa, Baku, and, certainly, the capital of the empire – St Petersburg (called Leningrad in Soviet years) were special towns. In the enormous sea of the Empire (Russian and then Soviet) and its rural population, they were islands of urban space and lifestyle as well as the few financial, industrial and cultural centres. Therefore, my research will be dealing with imperial towns, i.e. centres of urban life which were created in the course of development and modernization of the Russian and Soviet empires, with the aim of servicing imperial goals and requirements. All these cities in their present-day image are the result of imperial planning and colonization of lands over which the Russian empire extended their control in XVIII-XIX centuries.[13] However, they were not colonial towns in the sense that we see this in other European empires of that time (Portuguese, French or British). They became even less colonial in the course of the implementation of Soviet national policy. At the same time, it is the imperial legacy that now, too, defines (to varying degrees, however) the socio-cultural landscape of these towns and constitutes the memory of the people who lived in them. Urban myths and discourses are riddled with civilizational rhetoric. A *key point* in various narratives was the construct of "truly European" cities or urban centres representing "bridges" between the "East" and the "West". It is impossible to ignore this legacy. However, a direct application of postcolonial theory to the specifics of the formation and development of St Petersburg, Odessa and Baku *must be approached with*

[13] I.e. all of the three cities were not representative of a "core area of the Russian empire" (see: Gorizontov).

careful consideration, particularly of the specifics of the imagined communities constructed in these urban centres.

It is established above that I have identified three urban communities for my research: the Odessites, the Leningraders, and the Bakuvians. The text of the monograph is divided into four chapters, which are in line with the logic of analysis of all of the research aspects and issues I have touched on.

Chapter one will deal with theoretical approach and research methodology.

Chapter two will analyze specifics of formation of urban spaces in the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union, in the context of civilizational discourses.

Chapter three will focus on analyses of the specifics of urban habituses of Odessites, Petersburgers and Bakuvians.

And finally, Chapter four will analyze the activities of the city clubs of the three communities.

Before beginning, I should stress once again that the analysis I am proposing does not imply an insistent search for similar features in these three urban communities. The features that make it possible to bring these communities together within one conceptual model are not of sole importance here. The differences that exist between them must a be studied as well. Therefore, my work will not focus exclusively on the common features and characteristics that unite these imagined urban communities. I will also address the differences that make up the complex, and therefore more interesting, mosaic of transnational networks and communities that post-Soviet migrants construct.

CHAPTER I

IMAGINED URBAN COMMUNITIES: THEORETICAL APPROACHES AND METHODOLOGY

Research cases

The "Club of Odessites" marked its 10th anniversary in Berlin in April 2012, first city club set up by migrants from Odessa within the Jewish Community of Berlin. Following it, the clubs "Leningraders" (*Leningradtsev*), "Bakuvians" (*Bakinets*), „Kyiv" (*Kiev*), "Moscow" (*Moskva*) and "Dnepr" appeared.[14] My research is concentrated on three clubs out of the six and, correspondingly, three urban communities: Oddesites, Leningraders, and Bakuvians.

Why these clubs? "Odessites" is the first such institution created to maintain the urban community in the situation of its dispersion, and the imagined community of Odessites seems to be the most organized, stable, and extensive, which also makes it the most interesting. All other city clubs were created by analogy with "Odessites", and I decided to analyze and compare two other clubs against the "original". I selected the "Bakuvian" club for pragmatic reasons, as it was the starting point of my research in 2007. As a result, even before I started working on my dissertation in 2010, I had collected a significant amount of field materials which describe specific features of this urban community. Finally, of the three remaining clubs - I gave my preference to the club of the Leningraders because of its noticeable differences from the Odessites and Bakuvians. Another important reason was my knowledge of that city, which I had repeatedly visited and each time lived there for several months.

The selection of the three clubs allowed for a simultaneously in-depth and nuanced comparative analysis, making it possible to study the main discursive and institutional practices of constructing the imagined urban communities of Odessites, Leningraders/Petersburgers, and Bakuvians. Such a comparison illuminates the urban communities' common tendencies of transnationalization, without losing, at the same time, the specifics of each individual case.

[14]The "youngest" club "Dnepr" appeared only in 2016 - this is a second attempt of migrants from Dnepropetrovsk (renamed Dnipro) to create its own club.

Each of the three cities in which these urban communities were constructed have transformed transnationally in the last twenty years, and have their own imperial and post-imperial "zest". All three were very well-known (special) centers of urban life in the Russian Empire and in the USSR, but for different reasons. The populations of these cities – the result of imperial expansion – were also noticeably diverse from an ethnic point of view.

Many residents left during the collapse of the Soviet Union and in the post-soviet period, owing largely to the major Jewish communities that settled down in Odessa, Baku, and Leningrad in the late 19th century – early 20th century and later emigrated, as early as the 1970s, to Israel and the United States. Migration brooks turned into wide rivers at the time of the collapse of the Soviet Union and in the first post-Soviet years.

Category of 'Identity'

When studying the specific features of the imagined urban communities, I deemed it necessary to focus on the practices of their construction (both discursive and institutional), while, at the same time, recognizing that such communities did not emerge as the intended result of any deliberate and consistently implemented social project. Rather, throughout the process of their formation there were many random coincidences and unforeseen events. The urban communities of Odessa, St Petersburg and Baku were constructed amidst rapidly changing conditions of everyday life, in very different and extremely volatile social, cultural and political contexts. Therefore, it would be a mistake to seek any typical features, categories or characteristics that are clear, fixed and unchangeable in time or social space. Instead, one should focus on myths and urban discourses, on texts and features of the "biographies" of St Petersburg, Odessa and Baku, and, finally, on the *work of imagination*[15] of their dwellers.

Initially, when trying to describe urban communities, I tended to think in categories of identity. However, as time went on, I arrived at the conclusion that the conceptual framework of "identity, both as a category of practice and a category of analysis" supposes the presence of almost solidified forms of self-identification and extremely impenetrable inter-group boundaries (Brubaker & Cooper 2000: 5-6). In the categories of "identity", it was difficult to reflect the ever changing processes of these communities and their permanent variability, as well as to draw a boundary between

[15]The term of Arjun Appadurai. See the section Urban communities and the work of imagination

analytical categories versus everyday discourse of my informants, who often think and describe their personal experience in the same categories of "identity".

According to Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, "Reification is a social process, not only an intellectual practice. As such, it is central to the politics of 'ethnicity', 'race', 'nation', and other putative 'identities'" (Ibid.: 5). In order to overcome the limits, the inevitable inconsistency and the semantic overloading, of the analytical category "identity", Brubaker and Cooper propose "more processual and active terms – identification and categorization" (Ibid.: 14-17).

David Laitin, in his turn, explores the category "identity" in a more processual way, and his experience is extremely informative for studying urban communities. He sought to describe a categorially large community – the "Russian-speaking population" dispersed abroad after the USSR collapsed. These are millions of people who landed outside the Russian Federation, where Russian is the main state language.[16] The Odessites and Bakuvians can (or even should) be described as part of those communities. For Laitin:

> "Identities are therefore categories of membership that are based on all sorts of typologies - gender, race, class, personality, caste. People are limited by, but they are not prisoners of, their genes, their physiognomies, and their histories in settling their own identities. And if powerful social forces motivate identity exploration – as they seem to do in our age – it is a constructivist face of identity that seems the more real" (Laitin 1998: 21).

The main initial focus of Laitin's research is ethnic Russians who live in the former Soviet national republics. However, in the process of his work in the field, he concludes that it is necessary to step outside these frameworks, and describes the studied community as follows: "They have begun to see themselves – in conglomerate terms – as a 'Russian-speaking population' […] involving non-Russian Russian-speakers" (Ibid.: 32-33). Eventually, the main goal of his research is to find an answer to the question of "whether Russians in diaspora may develop a new conglomerate identity" (Ibid.: 32-33).

Questioning what kind of a future awaits these "children of the Empire"[17], Laitin pursues an understanding of "the dynamics of identity shift", instead of trying to fit this community "into a particular category". Eventually, Laitin attempts to reflect the

[16]Natalya Kosmarskaya says that according to the last Soviet census in 1989, the number of Russians and Russian speakers (i.e. those whose main language for everyday communication was Russian) was 36m (Kosmarskaya 2006: 18).

[17]Kosmarskaya aptly describes members of this community through a capacious definition of "Children of the Empire" (Ibid.).

prevailing interest in dynamics and processes, talking about "identity in formation". However, in my view, the attempt to modify this term doesn't help much when describing different kinds of dynamic processes. An analysis in categories of "identity" or "conglomerate identities" is an insurmountable obstacle to describing the dynamics of transformation experienced by Russian-speaking communities and, likewise, to identifying their discursive boundaries and categories of membership.

Ethnicity and Nationality: From Soviet to Post-soviet

The next but no less important reason I decided not to use the category of "identity" to describe post-soviet urban communities is that this category is very often employed for analysis of such social and political phenomena as "ethnicity" and "nation". In my work, I will also address these socio-political phenomena, as they are crucial to understanding the specifics of constructing Soviet urban communities, which have transformed in the past two decades into transnational ones. These categories must inevitably also be addressed in describing the diasporal context.

According to Laitin's observations: "Stalin's ideas on national identity continue to have a profound influence on the national identity question throughout the former Soviet Union. For him, nations were the result of a common culture, a common language, a common economic life, and a common territory" (Ibid.: 10).[18] Eric Hobsbawm aptly suggests that the theory proposed by Stalin is the most well-known among many attempts to delineate objective criteria for the "status of nation", and still remains the most influential in the post-Soviet space (2002: 5-6). Stalin's concept is also supplemented and developed by the "ethnos theory", as well as the identity concepts developed by Yulian Bromley, who "was perhaps one of the most well-known Soviet anthropologists outside the Union. The position on ethnicity taken by Bromley and his colleagues is one of the most strongly primordialist" (Banks 2003: 17). This concept was formed in the context of "Marxist interpretation of history" in the 1970s and 1980s. Gradually, these ideas of ethnicity, ethnos, and nation became commonly used, often daily, categories of identification and practice for Soviet people (Malakhov 2007: 50).

Such is the case for my informants: Odessites, Leningraders, and Bakuvians. Even while making attempts at rejecting these ideas, they continue to think in the same

[18] See also: (Slezkine 1996: 203).

strongly primordialist categories. Having mastered the Soviet language of describing their and other people's ethnic and national identity in primordialist and ethno-nationalist categories as early as primary school, they simply do not know another language to describe these phenomena. Rogers Brubaker points out:

> "The Soviet institutions of territorial nationhood and personal nationality constituted a pervasive system of social classification, an organizing the 'principle of vision and division' of the social world […], a standardized scheme of social accounting, an interpretative grid for public discussion; a set of boundary-markers, a legitimate form for public and private identities; and, when political space expanded under Gorbachev, a readymade template for claims to sovereignty" (Brubaker 1997: 86).

Ethno-national identity was recorded in a multitude of documents, including the well-known fifth paragraph in Soviet passports (Kostirchenko 2009: 217; Baiburin 2012). Throughout their lives in the Soviet Union, each of my informants personally filled out lots of questionnaires in which they habitually indicated their ethno-national identity. With each new questionnaire or document, they got used to thinking of themselves in the same categories, viewing ethnicity and nation not as social categories but natural and biological ones. Many of those bureaucratic practices did not sink into oblivion along with the collapse of the USSR (Malakhov 2007: 50-51; Rumyantsev 2011: 84). Although gradual changes do occur, the overall situation in this area demonstrates the stability of many ideological, discursive and bureaucratic soviet frameworks that were developed to describe and record ethnic and national identities.

Imagined urban communities are interesting precisely because their members have made attempts to reject, among many other constructs, the rigidly imposed ethno-national categories. They also attempt to go beyond the discourse of a single multinational Soviet people. Representing their communities, my informants often stress that the ethno-national and soviet categories of identity do not play an important role for the Odessites, Leningraders or Bakuvians. This rejection implies a search for other possibilities, stressing the uniqueness of their imagined communities. Yet, even as they attempt to step outside the framework of the Soviet national project, Odessites, Leningraders, and Bakuvians inevitably reproduce it discursively, continually "speaking Bolshevik" (Kotkin 1995: 198-237). Odessites and Bakuvians often use the term "nation" to distinguish their urban community ("the nationality Odessite," (*nacional'nost' odessit*),

"there is such a nation Bakuvians!" (*est' takaja nacija bakincy!*). Though to a much lesser degree, one can also find these kinds of discursive constructs in the case of Petersburgers "persons of Petersburg nationality" (*lica peterburgskoj nacional'nosti*), "a special nation of Petersburgers" (*osobaja nacija peterburzhcy*).[19]

Richard Jenkins suggests that self-identification with one's ethnic group alone is not sufficient, and one should also be attentive towards social categorization (Jenkins 1997: 166). Continuing his thought, he stresses: "Socialization *is* categorization. […] What is more, categorization continues to contribute in a significant fashion to individual identification throughout adult life. […] Without categorization, there are no socialized individuals" (Ibid.: 166). A similar heritage (i. e. socialization *as* categorization) in terms of ideas of nation and ethnicity also affects post-Soviet urban communities to a considerable degree. The documented ethno-national identity as social status played (and often continues to play) an essential role in the life of many of my informants. The strength and influence of these ideas on the daily life and behavioural patterns of my informants should not be underestimated.

Therefore, I must clarify how I will be understanding phenomena of ethnic identity. Three of the four postulates of the *'basic' anthropological model* listed by Richard Jenkins seem important:

> "Ethnicity is concerned with culture – shared meaning – but it is also rooted in, and the outcome of, social interaction;
>
> Ethnicity is no more fixed than the culture of which it is a component or the situations in which it is produced and reproduced;
>
> Ethnicity is collective and individual, externalized in social interaction and internalized in personal self-identification" (Ibid.: 165).

Group boundaries are always transparent, and the communities themselves are internally heterogeneous. Although my informants personally emphasize the low importance of ethno-national identities, they often imagine the boundaries of urban communities as nearly impenetrable. In order to emphasize the strength of the boundaries and their "reality", they frequently resort to ethno-national and group categories. Brubaker explains:

> "Somehow, when we talk about ethnicity […] we almost automatically find ourselves talking about ethnic groups. […] Ethnicity […] should be

[19] See for example: (Arnold 2003)

> conceptualized not as substances or things or entities or organisms […] but rather in relational, processual, dynamic, eventful and disaggregated terms. […] It means thinking of ethnicization […] as political, social, cultural and psychological processes. And it means taking as a basic category not the 'group' as an entity but groupness as a contextually fluctuating conceptual variable" (Brubaker 2002: 165-168).

Analysing the materials I have collected, I will focus on postulates described by Jenkins while grounding my interpretation in Brubaker's critical anti-groupness approach. In my opinion, both researchers do not contradict but rather complement each other.

Thus, speaking of urban "communities", I do not refer to homogeneous and strictly solidary groups. And, of course, I do not consider their specifics in ethnic categories, as my informants often do. I considered imagined urban communities as internally heterogeneous and sought to study discourses of constructing solidarity myths.

Urban communities in the context of diasporal discourse

To what Brubaker said I should, however, add that *when we talk about ethnicity* we often also talk about diasporas in categories of "groupism". In the past 20 years, the popularity of the term diaspora has continually grown (Brubaker 2005: 1-2; Kosmarskaya 2011: 56-57). It is primarily the Jewish diaspora that is described in categories of "groupism", and the transnational transformation of the urban communities of Odessa, Leningrad, and Baku is caused to a considerable extent (but not completely) by the ethnic Jewish segment of these urban communities. In Berlin, the city clubs themselves have also been organized within the framework of the city's Jewish community which provides resources necessary for its existence. Therefore, I must discuss a direct link between the transnational urban communities of Odessites, Bakuvians, and Leningraders and the Jewish diaspora. Yet, Jews were not the only migrants to leave Petersburg, Odessa, and Baku, and it is important to recognize, at the same time, the diasporal discourse of ethnic Russians, Ukrainians, Azeris, and other emigrants from the post-Soviet space[20], who also participate in the construction of the transnational communities.

[20] The term "diaspora" is widely used in mass media, political discourses in the post-Soviet space and also in academic texts (see Kolstoe 1995; Laitin 1998; Braun 2000; Satzewich 2002; Rumyantsev 2010; Kosmarskaya 2011).

All of my informants self-describe as members of various ethno-national diasporas, mainly the Jewish diaspora, while most others are Russian, Ukrainian or Azeri. Many of my informants, however, also consider themselves members of different diasporas simultaneously. A Jewish Bakuvian or Jewish Leningrader may claim membership (or even be an activist) of two groups at the same time, and many Odessites are comfortable as representatives of both the Jewish and Ukrainian diasporas, and for many of my informants, even a dual diasporal membership is often only symbolic. Many take part (often an active part) in events held by any post-Soviet diaspora if they are organized by people who are, like themselves, Russian-speaking migrants from the former USSR. You may hear or read increasingly often about various Odessan or Baku diasporas existing.[21]

Certainly, the Jewish diaspora provides the essential resources that make it possible to set up migrant institutes (city clubs). But is that a sufficient basis to describe the communities of Oddesites, Bakuvians or Leningraders in diasporal categories? In my view, the example of the Jewish diaspora as a classical one is not relevant in this case. According to William Safran "for many generations, the phenomenon of Diaspora was dealt with only in connection with the Jews".[22] Such an approach means that the diasporic community is characterized as follows:

> "it developed a set of institutions, social patterns, and ethnonational and/or religious symbols that held it together. These included the language, religion, values, social norms, and narratives of the homeland. Gradually, this community adjusted to the host land environment and became itself a center of cultural creation. All the while, however, it continued to cultivate the idea of return to the homeland" (Safran 2005: 36-37).

Safran also indicates the seven criteria which describe namely the Jewish diaspora, to create "an ideal model" which may be applied, in his view, to Armenian, Greek, Chinese, Indian and some other diasporas.[23] At the same time, the particular specificity of the Jewish diaspora is as follows:

> "For Jews, diaspora has had a specific meaning historically — that of exile under conditions of minority status and of powerlessness. It has also connoted a

[21]Unlike Leningraders/Petersburgers, who are not as likely to think of themselves in categories of diaspora.
[22]On the term Diaspora, it may be added: "Once exclusively used in a context-bound way, that of Jewish history and the plight of Jewish people being dispersed 'among the nations', in late 20th century the folk term became generalized on a grand scale" (Baumann 2000, p. 313).
[23]On 'genesis of diasporas' see also: (Oded 2008; Doukellis 2008).

continuing sense of insecurity, for Jews have been the proverbial Other in terms of religion, dress, customs, cuisine, and language, so that they have constituted convenient scapegoats and have been subjected to forcible conversion, expulsion, and massacres" (Safran 2005: 38).

However, such traumatic experience does not appear relevant to the dominant collective memory of Odessa, Leningrad and especially Baku Jews. While familial recollections of the Odessites may retain stories of the early 20th century Jewish pogroms (Humphrey 2012), there were no such events in Petersburg or Baku. Certainly, very many of my ethnic Jewish informants were familiar with anti-Semitism in one form or another, but this does not define their everyday experience, and does not inhibit their desire to ascribe themselves to "multinational" urban communities.

The second half of the 19th century – when the process of constructing the modern urban communities of Odessa, Petersburg, and Baku began – also saw the beginning of the emancipation of Jews in the Russian empire (Slezkine 2004: 105-204; Wierzbieniec 2005). As a result of rapid urbanization, Jews made up a third of the population of Odessa by the early 20th century. Also fast growing were the Jewish communities of Petersburg and Baku. In the 1920s-30s, the period when the USSR formed, ethnic Jews were the most urbanized and educated group, and took advantage of wide access to the political and cultural elite of the USSR (Slezkine, Ibid.: 117-129).[24] It was in that period that group boundaries were diluted particularly quickly. Gradual emigration began as early as the 1970s, and grew exponentially during the disintegration of the USSR. I will continue to stress one of the results of this emigration, being the formation of transnational communities of Odessites, Leningraders, and Bakuvians.

According to Safran, "for Jews, religion has been the most important element of diaspora" (Safran 2005: 41), and religion has played an important role in the maintenance of the community. But, in my opinion, this statement does not contradict the fact that practices and traditions of Judaism during the Soviet period, for the absolute majority of Jews, were maintained at the symbolic level. The synagogue was not so much a house of worship as it was a "club" to meet and communicate. Since it was not possible to set up "Jewish clubs" or cultural centers in post-war years[25] in the USSR, synagogues were often the place where people met and communicated. Visiting temples did not necessarily imply

[24]More details: (Slezkine 2004).
[25]I will continue to use this expression to denote the period of socialization of many of my informants. Here, of course, I mean the Second World War.

or require religiosity on the part of the visitors, or aspiration to study and maintain Jewish traditions. In fact, leaders of the communities still frequently describe my informants as “not real Jews”, having lost knowledge of traditions. In reality, traditions related to Judaism were simply ousted, considerably, by many other secular, Soviet and/or urban rituals.

The Soviet authorities imposed rigid frameworks of recording "biological nationality" in documents. Anti-Semitic sentiments were maintained on a daily level, and they were periodically stirred up by the authorities. As a result, visits to synagogues and knowledge of tradition stopped playing an important role in preserving identity. Regardless of his/her identification or religious practices, an ethnic Jew (and likewise a Russian or Azeri) would always be a Jew, both in the eyes of the authorities and in the perception of people around them. While certain discrimination persisted, one of the advantages in this situation was the fact that ethnic Jews had the opportunity to participate on equal terms with Russians, Ukrainians or Azeris in constructing different non-ethnic and non-religious communities like, for example, the communities of Odessites, Petersburgers or Bakuvians.

Another key aspect of the specificity of community life is the relation with “the historic homeland”. Safran points out that “one of the most characteristic, indeed essential, aspects of Diasporas is their trans-political linkage to the homeland. This includes cultural, economic, and demographic imports and exports and reciprocal influences” (Safran 2005: 45). In the case of the Odessa, Leningrad/ Petersburg and Baku communities, one may note that they were formed not long before the establishment of the state of Israel. Relations with “the historic homeland” for a long time had, of course, rather limited character, but were always important. Gradually, these relations became stronger in the 1970s when many Jews from these cities began to emigrate from the USSR (Gitelman 2001: 174-195). Prior to that point, there were personal, family, friendly relations, but of course during Soviet times Israel could not have influenced the formation and maintenance of any institutional diasporic structures.

At the present moment, contacts and links with Israel, which is often described as the “historical motherland”, are much more intensive and important. However, more active visits to the Jewish community and synagogues or an increased interest in learning traditions does not lead to a levelling of the cultural boundaries among the ethnic Jews from Odessa, Leningrad or Baku. As Robin Cohen’s puts it:

> “All scholars of diaspora recognize that the dominant Jewish tradition is at the heart of any definition of the concept. Yet, if it is necessary to take full account of

this tradition it is also necessary to transcend it. Jewish diasporic experience is much more complex and varied than many assume. The Jews are not a single people; they have a multi-faceted, multi-located history with a genetically complex set of roots. At different periods, they looked either to their homeland or to more local links. Like other ethnic groups, their history is socially constructed and selectively interpreted" (Cohen 2008: 34-35).

Cohen's observation is valuable and ought to be developed further. I should point out that the organized Berlin community of Jews (my informants) has not managed to level the inner diversity of its members. In fact, quite the opposite. Ethnic Jews who are natives of the post-Soviet space use the resources of the community to preserve and reconstruct the boundaries among natives of not only (and not so much of) different Soviet republics but also of cities. Here, one should once again recall that Jews were once the most urbanized group and more likely to describe the city as "motherland". As Soviet Jews did not have their own national republic[26], there was not a larger territory for which they could form this association. So, if we consider the Jewish Diaspora, following James Clifford, as only the "ideal type" of such communities, we cannot distinguish interesting multi-local specificities and histories of various communities which have formed within the Russian Empire and USSR. At the same time, according to Clifford:

"We should be able to recognize the strong entailment of Jewish history on the language of diaspora without making that history a definitive model. Jewish (and Greek and Armenian) diasporas can be taken as nonnormative starting points for a discourse that is traveling or hybridizing in new global conditions. For better or worse, diaspora discourse is being widely appropriated. It is loose in the world, for reasons having to do with decolonization, increased immigration, global communications, and transport – a whole range of phenomena that encourage multi-locale attachments, dwelling, and traveling within and across nations" (Clifford 1994: 306).

It should be added that diaspora discourse is being widely appropriated, and by very different Jewish communities. In my opinion, the Odessa, Petersburg/Leningrad or Baku Jewish communities might be considered among those whose history does not

[26]Not taking into account the Birobijan autonomy – an unsuccessful experience of territorializing Jews within the USSR (Gitelman 2001: 88-114).

always fit into the "ideal type" of diaspora framework. To summarize the foregoing, it makes sense to focus my analysis on the local specificity of these Jewish communities. An approach that appeals to the image of the "ideal"/"classical" diaspora is not helpful in this case. In my opinion, it will be more fruitful to justify the analysis of these communities' specificity – and their places in wider city-communities – from the perspective offered by Rogers Brubaker:

> "Rather than speak of 'a diaspora' or 'the diaspora' as an entity, a bounded group, an ethno-demographic or ethno-cultural fact, it may be more fruitful, and certainly more precise, to speak of diasporic stances, projects, claims, idioms, practices, and so on" (Brubaker 2005: 13).

Thus, in terms of diasporal aspects, I will be looking at the Jewish communities of Odessa, Petersburg/Leningrad and Baku from the perspective proposed by Brubaker, which implies the instability of their forms and practices. The things that normally face diaspora researchers, such as links between a country of origin, the construction of diasporal structures, or preservation of culture and religion are not topical for me. Rather, the opposite – I aimed to understand why ethnic Jews became part (and often a key or very influential part) of urban communities that transcend the boundaries of ethnic groups and diasporas. I also asked the same question about ethnic Russians or Azeris, i.e. all those who in other social and cultural contexts may represent themselves as members of ethnic or diaspora groups. An active participation by ethnic Jews in the process of transnationalization of the post-Soviet communities of Oddesites, Petersburgers and Bakuvians gives the groups special features. However, the simultaneous participation in this process of many other non-Jewish city residents makes it possible to step outside the framework of the Jewish diaspora. In a way, outside the framework of the phenomenon of diaspora altogether. At the same time, diasporal elements can also be observed in these three communities, especially in terms of their transnational and translocal nature.

In a way, these two concepts can be viewed as mutually exclusive. But I prefer to talk about them as complementary, making it possible to stress the specifics of transnational local links and networks constructed by members of these communities. The term *translocal* indicates the styles of imagination which are directly linked to a particular place, or specific city space. *Transnationalism*, on the other hand, refers to nation states and, depending on the community in question, to ethno-national diasporas.

To some extent, all of my informants identify themselves with a nation state and an imagined community. That may be the now former Soviet republics of Ukraine or Azerbaijan or the Russian Federation. That may be the "historical motherland" Israel, or their current homeland i.e. place of residence – Germany. In the context of these intersecting relations, they construct transnational networks and spaces: "relatively stable, lasting and dense sets of ties reaching beyond and across the borders of sovereign states. They consist of combinations of ties and their contents, positions in networks and organizations, and networks of organizations that cut across the borders of at least two nation states" (Faist 2004: 3-4). I view the city club as such an organizational network or social institution.

It should also be stressed that "this term focuses on people and groups and does not necessarily refer to official bodies" (Ben-Rafael & Sternberg 2009: 1). Not only migrants but residents of Odessa or Baku who did not emigrate often strive to maintain relations across borders and construct transnational spaces. To this end, their personal and/or group *social capital* is a resource for establishing and maintaining wide, and often very intensive, contacts among members of the community scattered across many countries.

Nina Glick Schiller proposes the term "transnationalism" to describe networks and spaces which demonstrate "a social process in which migrants establish social fields that cross geographic, cultural, and political borders". Schiller leads us to the idea of transmigrants, who "develop and maintain multiple relations – familial, economic, social, organizational, religious, and political – that span borders" (Schiller, et. al.1992: ix). In the context of this approach, the process of constructing transnational networks and spaces can be simultaneously observed on the local, national and global levels. Glick Schiller proposes focusing on the process itself and social relations "rather than on culture, identity, or the 'functional' domains of integration within the particular nation-state" (Schiller & Cağlar 2008: 47).

In turn, the idea of *Translocality*, I think, expands the analytical frameworks and makes it possible to stress the particular attachment (symbolic or imaginary) to a specific place in space – the city of origin. The communities of Odessites, Bakuvians or Leningraders are also constructed as contra versa to national communities or ethno-national diasporas. They are wider and, at the same time, narrower than many frameworks in which national (ethnic, civic, religious) communities are constituted. Simultaneously, they are associated with the more specific local space of one city. However, in the modern context, one's presence in that city is not of sole importance, but also activity within transnational networks. For migrants, the city of origin is a *symbol city* or a *memory city* which in its present-day condition has increasingly less to do with the "real city" they lived in. These symbols and sites of memory are important preserve a certain urban community, while also constructing a kind of new transnational urban community. In the migrant imagination, all members of one community are attached to a specific place – their hometown. In their daily lives, they are members of transnational networks and communities scattered across dozens of countries and cities. Discussing translocality, Ulrike Freitag and Achim von Oppen underline:

> "In the descriptive sense, we refer to Translocality as the sum of phenomena which results from the multitude of circulations and transfers. It designates the outcome of concrete movements of people, goods, ideas, and symbols which span spatial distances and cross boundaries, be they geographical, cultural or political. Translocality as a research perspective, in contrast, more generally aims at highlighting the fact that the interactions and connections between places, institutions, actors, and concepts have far more diverse, and often even contradictory effects than is commonly assumed" (Freitag & Oppen 2010: 5).

This is the *far more diverse* situation, unreducible to categories of nation state and diasporas or (post)imperial identities, that we can observe in the case of Odessites, Bakuvians, and Leningraders. It is also important to stress that the approach based on this perspective "also situates social actors in translocal and transnational networks as well as in the different local context in which they operate" (Ibid.: 6). These local contexts, uniting transnational communities of Odessites or Bakuvians, are each very diverse. The specifics of the transnationalization process of these groups have to do with their adaptation to these very different local urban contexts (one city of origin and many other cities of residence), which leave their imprint on the styles in which these communities are imagined.

The styles in which the post-soviet city-communities are imagined

In his famous book "Imagined Communities" Benedict Anderson says: "Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/ genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined" (1998: 6). And although Anderson is more focused on describing political imagined communities (nations), his observation is valuable in other cases as well, including in the situation of the construction of transnational and translocal urban communities. Thus, my research is primarily aimed toward understanding *the style in which they are imagined*. Following Anderson, I am also using the category of imagination in an attempt to study the construction of the communities of Odessites, Leningraders, and Bakuvians. In my view, the origin of this imagination should be sought in the second half of the 19th century, when these communities had just begun to form.

In the case of the communities of Odessites, Leningraders or Bakuvians, we are not talking about imaginary identities produced in the frameworks of national projects. Certainly, members of the communities of Odessites, Leningraders or Bakuvians may be members of different national communities and take part, to a varying extent, in mobilization projects implemented by Israel, Russia, Ukraine or Azerbaijan. Yet, while taking part in the activities of transnational city clubs, they end up outside the boundaries of those mobilization projects. These supra-national specifics also define the degree of participation in the national projects. For example, the Bakuvians are more linked with projects run by the Azerbaijani authorities (receiving some symbolic or financial support) than Russians or Ukrainians are with projects run by the authorities of Ukraine and Russia – governments less concerned with these communities. Ethnic Jews are more connected with policies implemented by Israel than with Ukraine, Russia or Azerbaijan.

In terms of urban communities, we can observe unforeseen, unintended results of imperial and national projects. The authorities, in the shape of the Russian and Soviet empires as well as the post-Soviet nation states, aspire to control and structure the life of urban communities. They view them as component parts of larger projects for nation construction, and aim to create and maintain different kinds of boundaries. Under the Russian empire class and religious boundaries were delineated, while cultural and ethnic lines were drawn in the years of Soviet power, and in modern post-Soviet successor states. In the past almost two centuries, the authorities have made tireless (albeit often inconsistent) attempts at ascribing different kinds of identities to their citizens, while

imposing styles of everyday, routinized life. At the same time, and most often in a very contradictory manner, they strove for cultural and linguistic homogenization of the population.

These attempts were made to a varying degree of intensiveness and insistence in different periods of history. The Soviet regime demonstrated a far greater will to exercise control over citizens' private life than any post-Soviet one. However, under all kinds of authorities and regimes, the inconsistent aspiration to structuralize (religious, cultural, ethnic and other kinds of) diversity– in line with one or another state objective/project and with simultaneous attempts at homogenizing the population (russification, sovietization, nationalization, etc.) – was met with counteraction from "grassroots".

Major cities could actually be those islands where practices of "resistance" to state-run projects accumulated. Where it was never possible to firmly set identities, boundaries, norms or rules of everyday behaviour imposed by the authorities. Where imagined communities unplanned by the state have appeared. And where identities and lifestyles imposed by the authorities were either ignored or were interpreted in a different way. Recalling the famous work of James Scott, I can say that when necessary, Odessites, Bakuvians or Leningraders *followed but did not obey the authorities* (Scott 1985). This disobedience did not carry an explicit or implicit underlying political message. No major and/or mass protests against the Soviet authorities (especially in the post-war period) took place in those cities (Kozlov 2002). We are also not talking about dissidence as complete rejection of the dominant power and ideology, but rather attempts at adapting to (or cautiously ignoring) the categories of identity and behavioural norms imposed by the authorities that contradict the "normal" everyday life of the Odessites and Bakuvians. Sometimes, the authorities retreated. Sometimes, city dwellers' behavioural norms adapted and changed. However, these imagined communities were constructed in the context of a constant *game* that has not stopped for the past 150 years, between the authorities and Odessites or the authorities and Leningraders.

The everyday resistance to state projects could be expressed in very different ways: in the naming of city spaces, not only to differ from the official names but also to ironize them– in a hidden (only among "our people") irony about people's compulsory participation in rallies held to mark yet another anniversary of the October Revolution or May Day; in the production of anecdotes and urban folklore songs; in clandestine parties with banned jazz and "Western" films screening; in the emergence of trade spaces of "Western" (or, as people said in the years of the USSR, "made by a firm") clothing; in the formation of people's own rules and norms of celebrating those events that city-

dwellers deemed to be more important and topical than official state holidays; and, finally, in the thing that distinguishes these communities, that is the construction of discursive boundaries of "our" communities (we are Odessites or we are Bakuvians) which were not planned within the framework of state policy; or, in another way, in the construction of their own imagined communities different from those that the authorities tried to establish. These cities were (and remain) special. They were centers of culture, within the space of which numerous intellectuals and ordinary residents created languages for a (self-)description of their urban imagined communities. These languages of (self-)description are widely used in literature, poetry, writing and, finally, in the everyday speech of residents of these cities. Every "true" Odessite or Bakuvian is fluent in this language (or discourse) of their hometown, owing to their social capital and urban habitus.

Social Capital and Urban Habitus

The categories of social capital and habitus help to reveal specifics of imagined urban communities. Through them, one can attempt to identify the principles of community membership and a number of aspects of their transnationalization. According to Pierre Bourdieu[27]:

> "Social capital is the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition – or in other words, to membership in a group – which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectivity-owned capital, a 'credential' which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word" (Bourdieu 1986: 248-249)[28].

Urban communities are in a practical and steady state of both material and symbolic exchange. They are assured of a common name originating from the name of a particular city and socially instituted. In the post-Soviet situation, urban communities are based on this relationship, which is "also partially irreducible to objective relations of

[27]Researchers often use these categories to describe urban communities in the situation of rapid change in the composition of the population. The analysis is articulated around the categories of social capital of city dwellers and urbanism, or habitus and urbanism. Most often, in research, it is about cities in Western Europe and the United States. See, for example: (Dilworth, Ed., 2006; Dirksmeier 2009). I believe that these categories are relevant in the case of urban communities in the post-Soviet space.

[28]Or, as John Field tried to sum up the concept of social capital: "Its central thesis can be summed up in two words: relationships matter. […] Membership in networks, and a set of shared values are at the heart of the concept of social capital" (Field 2003: 1, 3).

proximity in physical (geographical) space or even in economic and social space" (Ibid.: 249). Rather, stable membership in networks of Odessa, Leningrad, and Baku residents are determined by kindred (family), friendly and neighbourly, or collegial relationships during the period (or at the moment) of localization in hometown (i.e. specific geographical and physical space). Stability of the exchange relationships (material and symbolic) is also linked to *the initial* and *secondary socialization* of dwellers living in a particular city (Berger & Luckmann 1969: 139-156). It is almost impossible to become a true "Odessite", "Leningrader" or "Bakuvian" without going through such periods of socialization, which is to say that the circumstances of socialization have an impact on the amount of social capital acquired by an Odessan, Leningrader or Bakuvian, and can determine the "size of the network of connections he can effectively mobilize" (Bourdieu Ibid.: 249).

In the post-Soviet situation, membership in communities is less connected with living in a particular physical space of the city, but is rather transformed into membership in migrant clubs and, to some extent, into active involvement in a variety of transnational social networks. Usually, the clubs are opened with the participation of the most prominent migrants of the city groups, meaning those who have the necessary social capital. Then, fellow townsmen who are interested in the work of clubs are invited.

By comparison, clubs created within their hometowns are transformed into public spaces intended mostly for the intellectual elite, and membership is acquired only by those who possess the necessary social capital. These clubs become centers of maintenance, development, and popularization of myths and discourses about the uniqueness of their cities and communities of Petersburgers, Odessites and Bakuvians. Public intellectuals and various cultural experts (first of all, historians, local historians, writers, journalists, and artists who achieved certain fame) have necessary social capital for membership.

It is not by coincidence that these clubs were formed between 1990-1991, in a period when Odessa, Leningrad and Baku residents began mass movement and the population of these cities actively emigrated. In this time, the *size of the network of connections* began to narrow primarily within the *hometowns*, and it was in this context that the city clubs were first set up in Odessa, Baku and Leningrad. After a period of time, when it became possible to mobilize a *new network of connections*, membership was defined by the common memory of the hometown and experience of emigration.

In the 2000s, new clubs are set up in various cities where natives of Petersburg, Odessa and Baku have relocated, and some of them are organized into networks, established and represented as *worldwide* or *international.* The benefit of membership in

these clubs and transnational networks is the opportunity to participate in the construction of "islets" of comfortable interaction worldwide. Admission to such *islets* is open, primarily, for fellow townsmen, but this does not reinforce internal homogeneity or impenetrability of the communities' boundaries. These *islets* are open not only to "genuine" Odessites, Petersburgers or Bakuvians, but also to other groups. In emigration, natives of these cities are friends and neighbours, often in contact with each other, or even becoming relatives much more frequently than it was possible in their previous life within the borders of a particular country and city. These neighbourhood contacts and frequent meetings, on the one hand, seem to blur the boundaries of imaginary urban communities. All of them (Odessites, Leningraders and Bakuvians) are emigrants from the former Soviet space. But, on the other hand, this experience leads to more clear understanding of the difference among them, and to the cultivation of this diversity. Each *islet* is not lost in a vast ocean of migrants; instead, they form an archipelago where inhabitants of separate *islets* travel amongst them. In doing so, they enter into a different kind of relationship with the Islanders from other *islets*, constructing networks based on friendship and kinship, common interests and memory. In other words, they are in a fairly steady state of material and symbolic exchange. The archipelago includes these separate islands, each with their own name (Odessites, Bakuvians etc.).

Diversity is supported by the experience of traveling amongst different islets and, as a result, gaining better acquaintance with different styles of imagination. According to Bourdieu, "Manners (bearing, pronunciation, etc.) may be included in social capital insofar as through the mode of acquisition they point to indicates initial membership of a more or less prestigious group" (Ibid.: 256). The difference in behaviour patterns, self-perception as well as language - various ways of pronouncing or combining Russian words, or ascribing different meanings to the same words – becomes most distinct when living in emigration. Even more so, considering that most of "the genuine Odessites" or "genuine Bakuvians" left their hometowns and brought their manners and accents with them. The distance between the remaining members of the community (inside the hometown) and the new residents of Odessa, St Petersburg and Baku is, in turn, imagined to be even greater.

Most migrants who consider themselves to be Odessites, Leningraders or Bakuvians are middle-aged and older people, thus it is too late for them to change their manners and pronunciation. They feel most comfortable in a Russian speaking environment, among other migrants from the former Soviet space. Although this environment is heterogeneous, each migrant tries to find or recreate his/her own

community or social network in this diversity, and perceive these efforts as the desire to restore the usual circle of acquaintances (a familiar social and cultural atmosphere). Just being around likeminded Odessites, Leningraders or Bakuvians makes a migrant from these cities very comfortable.

All of them are considered Odessites or Bakuvians because they have a right to membership in the community and transnational networks set up by migrants from these cities. Or, in other words, they all have social capital required for this membership: speaking the same language, laughing at the same jokes, listening to the same music, dressing in a similar style and making favorite dishes since childhood. They have common things to talk about and can discuss the news from their hometown. Meanwhile, having others to share memories with fills daily life with positive emotions and meaningful interactions. These newly established migrant ties and relationships are "a product of an endless effort at institution", and new (transnational and translocal) networks of connections are also:

> “necessary in order to produce and reproduce lasting, useful relationships that can secure material or symbolic profits […]. In other words, the network of relationships is the product of investment strategies, individual or collective, consciously or unconsciously aimed at establishing or reproducing social relationships that are directly usable in the short or long term” (Ibid.: 249).

Casual contacts among emigrants from Odessa, Baku, and Leningrad often become “relationships that are at once necessary and elective, implying durable obligations subjectively felt (feelings of gratitude, respect, friendship, etc.)” (Ibid.: 249-50). Of course, these relationships may be competitive or even hostile, but negative relations also take on special significance when established among fellow townsmen, or migrants from the same city. In fact, the exchange of signs of recognition, respect or competition for status in the group reproduces the group "through mutual recognition and the recognition of group membership which it implies" (Ibid.: 250).

Rivalry can occur over leadership of the city clubs, yet the very emergence of these clubs enables the creation and maintenance of "more or less institutionalized forms of delegation". Migrants from Odessa or Baku are represented by a "small group of agents" (Ibid.: 251), who are often more or less known in their communities, and who obtain their authority due to their social capital. Club leaders are usually intellectuals or activists who are ready to spend their time organizing institutions and collective events. Often among them, but not necessarily, are those whose name was known in their

hometown even before emigration. People known in the whole former Soviet space are at the head of the city clubs established in Odessa and St Petersburg, for example the president of *the Worldwide Club of Odessites* is Mikhail Zhvanetskiy, a popular artist, and satirist. The president of *the Worldwide Club of Petersburgers* is a famous scientist and director of the Hermitage, the most recognizable Russian Museum in the world, Michael Piotrowski. In both of these cases, the name of the president facilitates a greater concentration of social capital and gives the club a certain weight and popularity.

Thus, positions of migrant club activists and leaders are directly dependent on their achievements over the years of living in their hometown. The more significant their social capital, the more likely it was that they would be recognized by the largest possible number of migrants from the same city, and the greater their chances of being invited to the administration of the city clubs. In addition to social capital, the position of a social agent in a network or group is also defined by his or her urban habitus:

> "systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations, that can be objectively adopted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them. Objectively 'regulated' and regular without being in any way the product of obedience to rules, they can be collectively orchestrated without being the product of the organizing action of a conductor" (Bourdieu 1990: 53).

The habitus of Odessites, Leningraders or Bakuvians generated by the urban environment where they were born and lived a significant part, or even majority, of their lives determines a similar style of behavior interiorized by these people, also demonstrated in a manner of communication. The habitus of Odessites, Bakuvians or Leningraders living in emigration – as a system of firmly acquired dispositions – reproduces rules of behavior that they followed in their hometown.[29] It enables them to reproduce structures of collective solidarity in the transnational space, in line with the idea of "habitus as social space, as a sense of one's place and a sense of the other's place" (Hiller & Rooksby 2002:1). It is this habitus which allows migrants, natives of Odessa, St Petersburg and Baku to know each other. One can say that urban habitus in this context acts as a form of social capital (Ibid.). Only a "genuine" Bakuvian and Odessite, born and

[29]For a detailed definition of the category 'habitus' see also: (Krais & Gebauer 2002).

raised in those respective cities, can have this special social capital (or urban habitus). More importantly, they are accepted by other members of the group or network as their own.

"Habitus is thus a sense of one's (and other's) place and role in the world of one's lived environment. [...] habitus is an embodied, as well as a cognitive, sense of place" (Ibid.: 5). As for Odessa, Leningrad, and Baku communities, this *place* is their hometown. Thus, it makes sense to talk in terms of urban habitus, and comparing a few cases allows us to distinguish the Odessites from the Bakuvians or the Petersburgers. Focusing on dispositions acquired through living in the space of one city reveals a similar urban habitus, as all members of one community or network have shared behaviors, even as they may differ in their social capital. Urban habitus also determines the durability of one's prior experience living in the hometown, as it may be re-actualized in emigration. Both social capital and urban habitus ensure membership in the urban community as well as the situation of dispersion.

In principle, all Odessites, Petersburgers and Bakuvians can be members of the migrant clubs or be active in transnational networks, but not all claim authority to construct influential urban discourses or participate in the creation and management of clubs. As mentioned, the authority is delegated to prominent figures in the community. Furthermore, the specificity of these communities are largely determined by the cultural capital of intellectuals, in addition to the high number of Leningraders, Odessites, and Bakuvians who have similar urban habitus. Thus, I consider urban habitus to be a categorial framework that allows us to understand and describe specifics of imagined urban communities.

The only question that remains is how much the category *urban habitus,* which refers to the idea of attachment to a certain place (a physical space of a specific town), can help to describe the process of rapid trans nationalization of local communities. Pierre Bourdieu and Loic Wacquant states that:

> "Habitus is not the fate that some people read it to be. Being the product of history, it is an *open system of dispositions* that is constantly subjected to experiences, and therefore constantly affected by them in a way that either reinforces or modifies its structures" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 133).

The situation of dispersion forces us to look for ways to develop new structures, using, at the same time, the resources at the disposal of members of these communities. Under the new conditions, urban habitus remains a key resource that reconstructs

practices and discourses of solidarity and creates new transnational networks. In his last work on this topic, Bourdieu tries to answer the question of the applicability of the concept of habitus to our fast-changing world. He develops the thesis that habitus should be sufficiently described as an open and volatile form of experience and behavior:

> "the habitus is not something natural, inborn: being a product of history, that is of social experience and education, it may be changed by history, that is by new experiences, education or training" (Bourdieu 2002: 29).

Constructing the network of urban clubs is a kind of response to the new experience gained by Leningraders, Odessites or Bakuvians in the dispersion situation. This is a way of organizing (or structuring) the formerly local community through a transnational network of institutions – clubs, as a means of organizing the daily life of emigrants, creating *islets* of Odessites, Bakuvians, and Leningraders worldwide. The social capital and urban habitus they acquired in a specific geographic space gives strength and stability to the post-Soviet transnational networks and groups. And the new experience gained in emigration enables them to use Diaspora resources, or capabilities of modern electronic media systems and fast travel, to reconstruct urban communities.

Urban communities and the work of imagination

A large number of migrants, whose everyday lives have been significantly changed by modern communications, were involved in the process of reconstructing their communities as they transitioned from local to transnational. But even before their appearance, and continually, the imagination of Odessites, Petersburgers and Bakuvians has been and remains "a major source of relating people across territorial boundaries" (Roemhild 2003:4). According to Arjun Appadurai, the daily "work of imagination" of ordinary Odessites, Petersburgers and Bakuvians dispersed through various countries and cities relies on, among other things, the resources of modern electronic media. A certain degree of locality is lost in exchange for some globality, which is symbolically reflected in the name of institutions which reconstruct the 'old' communities into a modern version. This is surely the case with the *Worldwide Club of Odessites* – the most globalized of all post-Soviet local urban communities. And, of course, the *Worldwide Club of Petersburgers*, or more modestly, the *Bakuvian International Cultural Society*.

Appadurai's statement that "few persons in the world today do not have a friend, relative, or coworker who is not on the road to somewhere else or already coming back home, bearing stories and possibilities" (Ibid: 4) is directly related to natives of those cities. A high level of mobility is one of the features of these urban communities. Jews and their families, due to the networks and resources of ethnicity, were actively migrating from Odessa, Leningrad, and Baku in the 1970s. Since 1989, this immigration has grown massively.[30]

Such often-repeated phrases among different people in the communities as "there are almost no 'genuine' Bakuvians or 'genuine' Leningraders/Petersburgers" reflect this tendency of rapid global scattering. According to Zhvanetskiy, who finds the most accurate metaphors to describe his own urban community[31]: "the Odessites are smeared in a thin layer on the globe." This is reflected in "genuine" Odessites living in Berlin or Los Angeles increasingly watching movies and listening to music glorifying their hometown. Though far away, they discuss TV shows about Odessa, and have their own websites, social networks, and online forums. News, newspapers, and books about their hometown are also widely available through electronic media. As for the Odessites or Bakuvians, we see that, according to Appadurai, "moving images meet de-territorialized viewers" (2005: 3-4).

Members of each of these urban communities consider the situation of their group to be unique and this is undoubtedly true, but each community has found itself in a very similar situation of rapid scattering of its members. Subsequently, new social networks and institutions designed to reconstruct urban communities in their present transnational and translocal form were created. The loss of normal daily routine, which consisted of a complex web of social connections and relationships (family, friendly, official, etc.) was counteracted in the 2000s with the construction of new transnational networks. Again, relationships among relatives and neighbours, classmates and fellow students, friends, and colleagues, which were lost during the process of immigration, could be restored. All this was possible due to the rapid development of social networks and electronic media.

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[30]Larissa Remennick describes these events: "Soviet Jews became effectively the only ethnic group granted the exceptional privilege of mass emigration from the Soviet Empire under the pretext of return to their historic homeland of Israel. Between 1971 and 1981, around 250,000 Jews left the USSR […] The demise of state socialism in Eastern Europe in late 1980s marked the onset of the great New Exodus of now former-Soviet Jews […] Since 1988, well over 1.6 million Jews from Russia, Ukraine, and other Soviet successor states have emigrated to Israel, the U.S., Canada, Germany, Australia, and a few other Western countries" (Remennick 2007: 3-4).
These figures include family members who are not ethnic Jews. In the post-Soviet period, not only ethnic Jews and members of their families migrate, but all residents of these cities, regardless of their ethnic identity.

[31] And, of course, first of all, the community to which the satirist belongs – Odessites.

Modern communication capabilities, the rapid dissemination of news and information, enable conditions for mass immigration to lead to equally massive new transnational social networks and various affiliated groups.[32] Communities of natives from the same city, reconstructed in these virtual networks, can be described in different terms with the prefix "trans". They consist not only of transnational families[33], but also transnational groups of former classmates or colleague, such as *trans*neighbourly and *trans*friendly groups. Experiences of shared memories, which can be a basis of the desire to construct various *trans*communities, can vary substantially. But in the end, they nevertheless link people socialized in the same hometown's space, and if this space produced people with a particular urban habitus, they easily find reasons and ways to build bridges among *trans*groups of classmates or former neighbours among the Odessites, Petersburgers and Bakuvians living in immigration.

The process of transnationalization of the city clubs, in the 2000s, presented various activities as the visible tip of the iceberg, above a strong base of popular social networks and various *trans*groups. Odessites or Bakuvians are not just sitting in their German or American houses and watching familiar movies and TV shows. Some of them (activists, or known intellectuals and businessmen, involved in the activities of the city clubs, etc.) create public spaces to watch movies and programs together. These are spaces where people can jointly experience moments of solidarity with each other and with the hometown. Here they produce a collective work of imagination that has much to do with "diasporic public spheres" mentioned by Appadurai. These de-territorialized viewers are united by a memory of life in their hometown, but not by identification with any ethnic group, diaspora or country of origin.

According to Appadurai, migrants in the modern world "move the glacial force of the habitus into the quickened beat of improvisation for large groups of people" (Ibid.: 6). However, in my opinion, based on the cases of communities I studied, the glacial force of the urban habitus as a form of social capital promotes circulation of mass-mediated imagination "that frequently transcends national space" (Ibid.). The question is not about a simple flow of information and the inevitable state of modern man in "the sphere of radio and television, cassettes, and videos, newsprint and telephone" (Ibid.). The participation in transnational and translocal networks and groups of Odessites or Bakuvians promotes a certain selection of information and its ongoing exchange. This is

[32]One of the most exciting projects implemented in the former Soviet space is the social networking service 'Odnoklassniki' ('Classmates'). Launched in 2006, it has over two hundred million users today.
[33] See, for example: (Goulbourne, et. al., 2010: 3-15).

not a question of how the media shapes people, but how people use the opportunities offered by modern electronic media for the construction of transnational networks and groups.

Paraphrasing Appadurai slightly, I can say that when dealing with the construction of transnational and translocal groups and networks of Odessites or Bakuvians, we have a collective work of imagination, which "can become a fuel for action" (Ibid.: 7). Focusing on the aspect of collective imagination, these communities can be described as a kind of a *community of sentiment* – "a group that begins to imagine and feel things together" (Ibid.: 8). Referring, as Appadurai does, to the thesis of Benedict Anderson, we can say that all members of the Odessite, Petersburger and Bakuvian communities could not have been familiar with each other.

However, production of different kinds of narratives played a major role in the creation of these communities and the formation of urban habitus. The influence of local newspapers, including their modern online versions, political essays (including memoirs), novels and poetry, and finally, radio, movies, and TV programs cannot be overemphasized. Unlike *communities of sentiment* described by Appadurai, the post-Soviet urban communities are no less, but more "subject to collectively shared criteria of pleasure, taste, or mutual relevance". But “Most important”, is that “these sodalities are often transnational, even post-national, and frequently operate beyond the boundaries of the nation” (Ibid.).

Thus, although Appadurai speaks about groups and communities that are somewhat different and divergent from those studied in this paper, the apt use of some of his observations enables us to extend our analysis of post-Soviet urban communities. It is important to remember that Appadurai’s observations (with some reservations) are much more significant for studying contemporary processes of transnationalization and translocalization of these communities, rather than for understanding their origin. The urban communities have undergone a transformation from local to transnational in the past twenty years, and the specifics of this transformation can be considered, to a large extent, from a perspective of Appadurai’s "theory of the recent past" (Ibid.: 9). But it should be also remembered when speaking about Odessites, Petersburgers and Bakuvians that resources provided by social capital and common urban habitus make these communities more united than *communities of sentiment* described by Appadurai. Does this mean that the transformation of these communities (or, metaphorically speaking, their rebirth in a new form) was inevitable, given the "joint force of electronic mediation" termed by Appadurai (Ibid.), and the mass immigration of Odessites, Bakuvians, and

Leningraders? I think the answer to the question is affirmative, and the fact that I have analyzed not only one unique case but several of these communities is a strong argument in favor of this position. According to Appadurai:

> "The diasporic public spheres […] are no longer small, marginal, or exceptional. They are part of the cultural dynamic of the urban life in most countries and continents, in which migration and mass mediation co-constitute a new sense of the global as modern and the modern as global" (Ibid.: 10).

Would the twenty-year-long transformation of the local Odessite, Leningrader and Bakuvian communities to the translocal and transnational ones be possible in any other situation? I would venture to answer the question in the negative. A number of key factors, from urban habitus and mass immigration to joint forces of electronic media, needed to interact to make this transformation possible.

Since 1989 and throughout the 1990s, when the mass immigration of natives of Odessa St Petersburg and Baku continued, contacts had been maintained and re-established on the basis of social capital and urban habitus. Migrants built up, step by step, new communication and acquaintance networks in their new cities of residence, as they tried to maintain relationships with family and close friends who remained in their hometown. These relationships were not originally transnational, but communication capabilities which expanded gradually due to the Internet, led to the actualization of these contacts. New communication technologies virtualize these relationships, but contacts become daily. Odessites and Bakuvians begin actively seeking their old friends and classmates, many of whom they have not seen for many years. Contacts are not only restored, but expanded as new groups and networks are built and city clubs are created.

Of course, my research concentrates on first-generation migrants, people in the middle and older age groups who socialized in Odessa, Baku and Leningrad/St Petersburg. This generation studied in their hometown until senior high school, at least, and only later emigrated, so their personal memory connects them with the hometown. Now, it is difficult to predict what the situation with the second and especially the third generation of Odessites, Leningraders and Bakuvians migrants will be. This is a question for another study. According to the stories of my informants, I can only say that their children (especially those who were born and raised in emigration) show much less interest in participating in networks and clubs of these communities.

Even if these transnational and translocal communities will be relatively short-lived, a study of them, in my opinion, will be more interesting for this very reason. All

the more so when dealing with Odessites or Bakuvians, we can see the validity of the thesis proposed by Appadurai "that globalization is not the story of cultural homogenization" (Ibid.:11). Here it is necessary to develop this thesis. The Soviet regime sought cultural homogenization in varying degrees, but in studying these communities we see how urban cultures "as the dimension of difference" (Ibid.: 15) have been constructed. How, despite the Soviet version of the policy of cultural homogenization, the specific urban habitus has been constructed. Thus, various imagined urban communities, unplanned within the Soviet project, were formed. Together, Odessites, Petersburgers and Bakuvians (as well as each of them separately) could be Soviet citizens, members of various ethno-nations or ethnic groups, etc. But these identities attributed by the state were not sufficient obstacles to the construction of the communities of Odessites, Petersburgers or Bakuvians. There were various state projects of the post-Soviet *nationalizing nationalisms*[34]: cultural homogenization of the population, integration policies of different homelands ("historical" or host country), and the policy of *culturalism* ("identity politics mobilized at the level of the nation-state"). In the face of these projects, all three communities successfully retained their local distinction.

Communities of Odessites, Bakuvians and Leningraders/Petersburgers appropriate, in Appadurai's words, "the materials of modernity differently". And the transformation of these communities in the past twenty years can be considered as an impressive example of "how locality emerges [or is reconstructed] in globalizing forms" and "how global facts take local form" (Ibid.:7-18). According to Appadurai: "Diasporic public spheres, diverse among themselves, are the crucibles of a postnational political order" (Ibid.: 22). Transnational and translocal post-Soviet urban communities, which are similar to these *diasporic public spheres,*[35] are among the most impressive examples supporting the fact "that the nation-state, as a complex modern political form, is on its last legs" (Ibid.: 19). And, at the same time, they reveal some of the most interesting socio-cultural phenomena of the emerging postnational political order.

[34]According to Rogers Brubaker: "Nationalizing nationalisms involve claims made in the name of a 'core nation' or nationality, defined in ethnocultural terms, and sharply distinguished from the citizenry as a whole. The core nation is understood as the legitimate 'owner' of the state, which is conceived as the state *of* and *for* the core nation". For more details see: (Brubaker 1996: 5). He ascribes this type of nationalism especially to the post-Soviet successor states.

[35]Representing, at the same time, the socio-cultural phenomenon that does not fit entirely within such spheres.

Individuality of Cities: the Cumulative Texture and Biographization

Not only the preservation, but also the production of local differences is directly associated with discourses of the uniqueness of urban cultural landscapes. “The fact that cities are individual entities, each with its own biography (i.e., history), with its state of mind and inherent patterns of life strategies, cannot be doubted,” says Rolf Lindner. And if the very fact of individuality, he continues, is unquestionable, the only question is why it was so difficult to recognize it as a scientific fact. “For literature, for example, this has never been a problem” (Lindner 2008: 83-84).

Recognition of the individuality of Petersburg and Odessa was not a problem for many poets and writers who created images of these cities in their works. According to Wolfgang Kaschuba, literary images can play a central role in the mythologization of urban history, culture and mentality. A variety of genres and, especially, genres of trivial literature (adventure novels and crime fiction) transfer these images to the field of their mass consumption, thereby giving them a special effect. “Only the literary image and presentation contribute to the emergence of an aura and authenticity, that is, explicit representations and narratives about the special atmosphere and the city's own spirit” (Kaschuba 2005).

Being the capital of the Russian Empire, Petersburg attracted many poets and writers as far back as the 19th century. In this center of production of imperial culture, works that glorified Russian literature were created in the second half of the 19th – the early 20th centuries. The city on the Neva became one of the main characters of many novels, novellas and poems. By the 20th century, Petersburg was already very difficult (if at all possible) to separate from its contradictory literary image created by Alexander Pushkin, Nikolai Gogol, Fedor Dostoevsky, Andrei Bely and many other writers and poets. Numerous works created in Petersburg have long become classical and are, as a rule, far from trivial literature. But in the case of Russian classics, the effect of their mass consumption also appears. A number of famous works (*The Bronze Horseman*, *Crime and Punishment*, etc.) were and remain mandatory for study in secondary schools in the Soviet Union and modern Russia as well. The works of Petersburgers Anna Akhmatova, Osip Mandelstam, Joseph Brodsky, Sergei Dovlatov were also published with huge circulations in the 1990s.

In the first decades of the same 20th century, Odessa saw the emergence of its own "poets' collective".[36] Somewhat later, writers and poets of this generation (Eduard Bagritsky, Isaak Babel, Valentin Katayev, Ilya Ilf, Yevgeny Petrov, Lev Slavin and many others) will be called representatives of the southwestern literary school. Thus, by the beginning of the last century, in the words of Gerald Suttles, "the cumulative texture of local urban culture*"* was created in Petersburg and Odessa. Suttles's most important contribution toward this study is that "local culture is not something that starts full blown but something that accumulates". And an important factor of accumulation is that it includes not only the artifacts of *high culture*, but also *popular culture*:

> "not just what people put in their museums, but also what they put on their car bumpers and T-shirts. This is a vast, heritable genome of physical artifacts, slogans, typifications, and catch phrases, the significance of which can be vouched for more or less by wider testimony. They are most appropriately called collective representations [...] these objective artifacts give local culture much of its stability and continuing appeal. The meaning of these artifacts is embedded less in mass sentiments than in the authoritative knowledge of 'experts' who interpret them" (Suttles 1984: 284).

Like U.S. cities on which Suttles's analysis is focused, Petersburg and Odessa were quite 'young' in the Russian Empire. Suttles writes: "Generally the accumulation of local culture is a matter of age; the process of selective memorialization takes time. But it must also be said that some cities emerged quickly with a strong image of themselves often repeated in their appearential order and in the statements of outsiders" (Ibid.). Petersburg and Odessa are precisely among those cities which acquired a special image of themselves very quickly.

As for Northern Palmira, which had remained the cultural center of the huge empire for two centuries, the accumulated narratives allowed linguist Vladimir Toporov to announce the appearance of the "Petersburg text". In the last two decades, this cultural construct has become like a virus, which is easily transferred to other cities and "literary schools". As a result, it is no surprise that the construct of the "Odessa text" was among the first to appear subsequently.[37] Suttles stresses that:

[36]The Poets' Collective is an "association of literary youth" that emerged in Odessa in 1920 (Aleksandrov 2015: 301-306).
[37](Toporov 2009; Ladokhina & Ladokhin: 2017).

> "Some places have a lot of such culture: songs that memorialized their great streets or side streets, homes once occupied by the famous or infamous, a distinctive dialect of vocabulary, routine festivals and parades that selectively dramatized the past, novels, dirty lyrics, pejorative nicknames, special holydays, dead heroes [...] and so on" (Ibid.).

Petersburg and Odessa are the most striking examples of cities in the post-Soviet space that saw the creation of a powerful layer of local culture. The most dramatic and contrasting forms can be found in the Petersburg tradition, but Odessa has also been accumulating this kind of culture for many years. Baku, by comparison, was much less fortunate. The little-known ancient settlement on the Caspian Sea was given a second life only by the middle of the 19th century, and before the revolutionary upheavals, the city had too little time to create a "Baku text" that is widely recognizable. One can say that it does not exist today. Categorical as this statement may be considered, one can go further, saying that the Baku literary tradition is not even comparable to those of Petersburg-Leningrad and Odessa. However, in the postwar years, Baku acquires its own literary images, local heroes, a lot of songs are dedicated to the city, Bakuvians create their *distinctive dialect of vocabulary*.

Suttles puts forward another very important thesis: "like individuals, cities get to know what they are and what are their distinctions from the unified observation of others" (Ibid.:284-285). It is an *outside view* that allows us to outline Baku's literary image. In the postwar years, the capital of "sunny Azerbaijan" is visited by numerous writers and poets from all over the USSR and abroad. They have left behind literary odes glorifying "the most international city" in the USSR, which they deemed to be a little 'eastern', southern, seaside, almost resort, imbued with Caucasian exotics. The city-myth of heroic oil workers comes to life in the works of not only writers and poets, but also journalists and artists. *Unified observation of others* and recognition of uniqueness of these cities play no less importance for Petersburg and Odessa.

The topic of the differences manifested among cities, which, according to Martina Löw, "is on everyone's lips", arises in the context of these intersecting external and internal views on the same city. Conceptions of differences allow us not only to more sharply realize individuality of cities, but are also an integral part of the myths about their uniqueness. Martina Löw refers to another important source. "There is vast general knowledge about the 'nature' of cities," she writes, "and it is publicly discussed mainly in newspapers and magazines" (Löw 2008: 34). Thus, general knowledge becomes part

of a public and often very influential urban media discourse. Suttles notes that: “Both local boosters and loyalist critics now find a common podium in the city magazine which monitors local culture on a monthly basis” (1984: 297). Regarding the model of ‘mediatization’ of the city ("Medialisierung" der Stadt), Kaschuba indicates that an imaginary city often turns into a practical component of urban identity. It becomes part of its image designed to attract tourists.

To city magazines and newspapers, we should add not only electronic media but also numerous serials and feature films made, as a rule, for a much wider audience. Such visual narratives can tell a lot about the cultural influence that goes far beyond the physical borders of Petersburg and Odessa, where the oldest famous film studios (“Lenfilm” and “Odessa Film Studio”) have been located for many years.[38] The visual images of the cities, as cultural, industrial or even criminal centers, produced by these film studios played a crucial role in understanding the individuality of the cities. Further to the idea of the influence of large cities, one should refer to Georg Simmel’s acute observations:

> “The sphere of life of the small town is usually self-contained and autarchic. For a metropolis, the decisive factor is that its inner life overflows by waves into a far-flung national or international area. [...] The most significant characteristic of a metropolis lies in its functional significance beyond its physical boundaries, and this efficacy reacts in turn and gives weight, importance, and responsibility to metropolitan life. [...] a city consists of its total effects which extend beyond its immediate confines. Only this range is the city’s actual extent in which its existence is expressed” (Simmel 1995: 126-127).

The specificity of the biographies of Petersburg and Odessa is connected with the fact that both cities were created as agents of Europeanization, and were meant to spread waves of modernization throughout the vast Russian Empire. They were built “from the ground up” as purely European cities in terms of their architecture and style of life, and were radically different from other cities of the empire. In modern urban discourses and narratives, the ‘Europeanness’ of Petersburg and Odessa is attached special importance, and the pre-revolutionary period of their history is often interpreted as a “golden age” in the texts of cultural experts.

[38]Baku’s oldest center of film – “Azerbaijanfilm”, was, for the most part, little known to a wide audience outside the republic.

For the relatively short period of the existence of Petersburg and Odessa, a huge number of local history texts, dedicated to various aspects of their history and everyday life, have accumulated. Compared to these cities' surfeit of local historical tradition, the few narratives dedicated to Baku look particularly poor and fragmented. However, Baku's influence also went far beyond its physical boundaries. For a long time, this city was the oil capital of the Russian Empire, and then the Soviet Union. Since the early 20th century, Baku – which became the capital of Azerbaijan – has claimed the status of a national center. Rolf Lindner stresses:

> "Cities are not empty pages but narrative spaces in which particular histories (about significant people and important events), myths (about heroes and villains) and parables (about virtues and vices) are inscribed. This abundance of meanings can be so great that it is enough to pronounce the name of a city to evoke a whole set of conceptions" (Lindner 2008: 86).

In this case, he refers to what can be specified as *urban imaginary* – "a set of meanings about cities that arise in a specific historical time and cultural space" (Zukin, et al., 1998: 629). Developing these ideas, one can say that the names of certain cities bring to life images and myths associated with the urban communities as well. Thus, the specificity of these communities is determined by the urban imaginary and urban habitus (*the 'character' of a particular place* [39]). Petersburgers, Odessites and Bakuvians, in turn, are also actively involved in construction of a set of conceptions associated with their cities. My research is focused on studying the connections between a city, as a narrative space, and its urban community, whose work of the imagination enables the maintenance of local cultural specifics in the era of globalization.

Goals, objectives, and questions of the research

I will focus on the process of transnationalization and translocalization of the urban communities by the example of Odessites, Leningraders/Petersburgers and Bakuvians. My primary goal is to understand, explain and describe this process, which began approximately in 1989 and is ongoing. In other words, the most important question is how and why these particular urban communities manage to survive in the new situation of

[39] (Lindner 2008: 92).

mass emigration and dispersion. What are the symbolic and social resources which enable the reconstruction of the urban community from local to transnational?

To understand the specifics of this process, and the reasons why these three local communities succeeded in such a transformation, I had to raise questions about the differences between Petersburg, Odessa, and Baku from many other cities of the Russian Empire and Soviet Union. Or, otherwise, how the local differences were discursively produced and maintained over the years. To consider these differences, I ought to refer to the "biography" (history) of these cities, in order to understand the specificity of their cultural landscapes, as well as the history and genealogy of the urban communities of the Odessites, Leningraders/Petersburgers, and Bakuvians. This leads to further probing: how and what led to the formation of the special urban habituses and what are their specifics? This is how I will define the major goals and objectives to be confronted in my research.

The overarching question, which I have formulated working in the field, can be defined as follows: why did stable, imagined urban communities appear in these cities after World War II, and what are the social, symbolic and other resources enabling them to transform from local urban to translocal and transnational*?* Exploring *cultural dimensions* of the urban communities, I tried to focus, by the example of Appadurai, on the active role of ordinary Odessites, Leningraders and Bakuvians, whose *work of imagination*, in my opinion, enabled them to construct these urban communities throughout the past century, and serves their current transnational transformation. In the context of this transformation, special attention must be paid to the discursive production of the urban habitus as well as questions about the effects of social capital.

Finally, to understand the specifics of these communities in their current state, it was necessary to study practices of their institutionalization in transnational and translocal contexts. Therefore, the city clubs were the focus of my research, being venues for various collective activities. Speaking about the `Zukunft` organization, which was located in Berlin, on Oranienburger Strasse, in 2000-2001, Victoria Hegner defines it as the Soviet-Jewish microcosmos ("*sowjetisch-jüdischer Mikrokosmos*") (Hegner 2008: 135). According to Hegner, some Jews ironically called the organization the Comintern (Communist International) and communities of the natives of Odessa, Dnepropetrovsk, and St Petersburg gathered within its walls to maintain their local patriotism (*Lokalpatriotismus*) (Ibid.: 143). Although the city clubs and communities were not the focus of Hegner's research, she was lucky to see the first attempts to create them, and in particular – a gathering of natives from Riga. Unlike the club of the Odessites, "the Jews from Latvia have not established themselves as a group" says Hegner (Ibid.: 205). In her

view, the Jews of Riga have turned out to be a very contradictory community (Ibid.: 203-212). Migrants of various historic waves of immigration ("Alteingesessene" and "Neue") had little in common, and as a result, the attempt to create a club led to the 2001 conflict among the Jews of Riga ("die dramatische Zeit") . At the same time, Hegner notes that a variety of "jüdische Existenz" makes the study of Jewish communities captivating for anthropologists, historians and social scientists (Ibid.: 212).

One of the most important theses that I put forward and defend in my work is precisely the fact that the study of the post-Soviet urban communities allows us to see the real diversity of those whom ethnologists and anthropologists in the past 30-40 years have often lumped together as Soviet or Russian-speaking Jews. The study of urban communities demonstrates that this group exists only as an ethnographic construct. That is, its members are united in a group only thanks to the imagination of anthropologists, historians and other experts who studied them. The *Soviet people*, which consisted of many distinct communities, can be understood as the same construct but on a larger scale. However, the urban communities of Odessa, Leningrad, and Baku are distinguished by special features.

Ethnic and cultural frameworks intended to group the different Soviet communities in nations/ethnos groups are not relevant with regard to the Odessites, Leningraders, and Bakuvians. Cultural and behavioral diversity, which Victoria Hegner observed among the ethnic Jews, is largely associated with the fact that their ethnic or religious identity was not the key criteria when constructing urban communities to which they attribute themselves. Therefore, speaking about the Soviet or Russian-speaking Jews from Odessa, Leningrad, and Baku, we should remember that they are both members of the smaller (than the nation) and larger (extra-ethnic and extra-religious) urban communities. It is the circumstance that, to a large extent, determines the diversity of the Jewish community in Berlin.

Ethnic Jews from Odessa and Baku took part not so much (or not only) in the maintenance of the boundaries of Jewish identity, as in the construction of the local urban communities. They were created in the course of everyday interactions of ordinary people in big cities – the few centers (islets) of urban and cultural life of great empires (Russian and Soviet). The emergence of these communities was not among the plans of the Soviet government, which sought to construct, attribute and take total control over all identities of the Soviet citizens. Maintaining this "intra-Jewish" diversity was also not a plan nor a priority of the organizations representing the Jewish Diaspora worldwide.

However, these urban communities have broken through not only the reluctance and indifference of the Soviet regime, but also survived the scattering of mass immigration since 1989, through transnational and translocal networks, communities, and institutions. When living in immigration, they continue (and perhaps even more insistently than before it) to construct the discourse of "us" Odessites, Leningraders, and Bakuvians, as particular communities, beyond any ethnic or religious group. The study of these communities in their modern form is my main objective.

The Research Methods and Field Materials

I should start by describing my experience of entering the research field. As Wolfgang Kaschuba states, “Entry into the field has a very important practical and symbolic significance”. According to him, it is necessary to establish a balance between the different roles that a researcher can play in the field. “Representing yourself as a researcher, guest or ordinary person can play a decisive role in further work” (Kaschuba 2012: 206). I introduced myself as a researcher in my first visits to events of the city clubs “Bakinets”, “Leningrad” and “Odessites” and presented myself in the same capacity to my informants when arranging interviews with them. Yet, in the club “Bakinets”, where I was initially perceived as Bakuvian, the situation was somewhat different. My personal connection with Baku dramatically reduced the informant/researcher distance.

The continuity and long span of my stay in the field (2010-2018) gradually changed my status. During participation, observation and meetings with informants, I was perceived more as a member of the clubs, a familiar acquaintance, and in some cases, as a friend. On multiple occasions I was invited to private events in restaurants or homes (birthdays, funerals, holiday feasts etc.).

The change in distance also manifested in the fact that, at some point, the leaders of all the city clubs in which I conducted research asked me to prepare articles about their activities and events. These texts were published in various magazines and newspapers of the Jewish and Russian-speaking communities. The head of *The Club of Odessites*, having read my first article dedicated to its twelfth anniversary[40], called me a “real Odessite” and expressed a wish that I become an honorary member of the club. I found

[40]Huseynova S. “Das goldene Dutzend“ Der Berliner Klub Odessa ist 12 Jahre Alt!“ Die Jüdische Zeitung, № 6 (130) Juni 2013

this a special form of recognition and a sign of my successful immersion in the research field. I can only express my deep gratitude for the attitude of all those natives of Petersburg, Odessa and Baku who shared their life stories in their hometowns and/or in emigration with me as a researcher. Undoubtedly, such an emotional connection with some informants and the field itself required additional and constant reflection, in order to analyze my collected materials.

The chosen research methodology proved helpful in this study, as I believe, according to Wolfgang Kaschuba, the selection of methods is determined in each particular case and depends on research questions and the topic of the study itself (Ibid.: 203). Guided by this approach, I re-analyzed the experience of my first short-term stay in the research field (Berlin) and determined the main methodological approaches. The collection of field materials was carried out by combining participant observation methods, biographical-narrative interviews and critical discourse analysis of various kinds of narratives (newspapers, magazines, popular journals). In addition, various visual narratives were collected and analyzed (personal and club photos, video materials, exhibit stands and bulletin boards of the city clubs, announcements of various club events, documentaries and feature films, etc.).

I deliberately ignored the numerous groups in social media, urban online forums, and sites where various topics related to the history of the cities and everyday life are discussed, often heralding nostalgic motifs. This is a huge block of materials that require a separate study, and I limited myself to analyzing the content of several Internet sites: *the Worldwide Club of Petersburgers*, *the Worldwide Club of Odessites* and the most popular sites among natives of Baku, *Our Baku* and *Baku Pages*.

The key method was participant observation. According to Kaschuba, the question "How long and in what role [the collection of materials by this method] is conducted, depends on the possibilities and necessity resulting from the linguistic or cultural distance, from research questions and field sizes, and also, to a large extent, from possibilities proposed by the researched" (Ibid .: 205-206). In the case of my research, the scale of the field was determined by four large cities: St Petersburg, Odessa and Baku (cities of origin), and Berlin (the city of emigration). Therefore, the collection of materials was also carried out in four different countries.

The main and longest period of participant observation took place in Berlin, where leaders and activists of each city club organize one event a month. Thus, considering I visited three clubs, as a rule I attended three club events every month. Of particular interest to me were the events dedicated to dates of commemoration (World War II

Victory Day, the days of the liberation of the cities, etc.) and various club jubilees (for example, the 10th anniversary of the founding of the clubs, etc.). In addition, I visited some events outside the clubs, where natives of St Petersburg, Odessa and Baku gathered, such as birthdays, funerals, New Year celebrations and others.

I undertook several long-term research trips to all three cities to research the social and cultural context in which the imagined urban communities of Leningraders / Petersburgers, Odessites and Bakuvians were constructed. In this case, participant observation was conducted primarily in city clubs established in St Petersburg and Odessa, as well as during city holidays. In Baku, the highest activity of the city club "Bakinets" fell at the beginning of the 1990s, and practically receded later. Therefore, in this case, I was limited to interviewing some former organizers of the club and reading newspaper excerpts on its activities. During the whole research period, I kept field-notes where I recorded not only my observations of various events, but also numerous informal conversations with natives of St Petersburg, Odessa and Baku on different occasions and in various places (restaurants and cafes, libraries and shops, taxis and trams, parks and playgrounds, etc.).

A huge proportion of collected materials are biographical narrative interviews. According to Gabriele Rosenthal, "Each interview is a product of the mutual interaction between speaker and listener. The narrator does not simply reproduce pre-fabricated stories from his or her life, regardless of the interactional situation, but rather creates his or her story within the social process of mutual orientation according to his or her definition of the interview situation". Following this idea, she states:

> "Within the interactional framework of the interview, the biographer relates his or her life story in a thematically focused context based on negotiations about what the interactants consider relevant. Life stories are not finished products ready to be 'served up' on demand. Biographical overall construct is the term for that context of meaning which is consciously not at the disposal of the biographer; by biographical global evaluation we mean his conscious interpretations. The story evolves around a thematic topic, usually established by the interviewer, in a manner judged by the narrator to be of interest to the listener" (Rosenthal 1993: 6-8).

In case of my research, this kind of thematically focused context was determined by the interest in memories of everyday life in the cities of origin, and also by a desire to

understand the specificity of the urban habitus of the natives of St Petersburg, Odessa and Baku. Adding to this, the research of practices and construction of meanings by emigrant networks and institutions, one can, therefore, identify the main topics of interviews. Each interview began with a request for the narrator to simply tell about his or her life. "This method has the advantage to learn how the biographer – if at all – is embedding the topic of our interest in the presentation of his/her life story" (Ibid.: 8-9). And yet in each interview and without my own intervention, the hometown of the narrator became one of the main "participants". It should be noted that often (but not in all cases) I became acquainted with future narrators in clubs or through contacts acquired in the same clubs. Such a situation could not help but leave its imprint on the subjects of the conversations.

Participant observation and informal conversations have reinforced that Petersburgers, Odessites, and Bakuvians like to talk about their cities of origin in their various meetings, and at length. Rosenthal states, "In order to be able to understand and explain the statements of an interviewee/ biographer about particular topics and experiences in his/her past it is necessary to interpret them as part of the *overall context of his/her current life* and his/her resulting present and future perspective" (Rosenthal 2004: 50). In my opinion, the constant relevance of city stories and relations of narrators with it, in the case of emigrants, is precisely connected with the fact that the conversations are conducted from a current perspective at the time of each interview. In other words, I am not asking "how it was in reality", but rather how the past is represented by each narrator right here, right now (see also: Kaschuba, Ibid.: 210).

Biographical narrative interviews were conducted with Leningraders/Petersburgers, Odessites, and Bakuvians who regularly attended club events (including activists and club leaders) and with those who rarely attended or even refrained from going to club events but were involved in informal networks created by emigrants from Odessa, Leningrad, and Baku in Berlin. As well as with those who currently live in Odessa, St Petersburg and Baku. A total of 63 interviews were conducted: 21 interviews with Odessa natives 18 interviews with Leningraders/Petersburgers and 24 interviews with Bakuvians. I was interested in people in Berlin who attended at least secondary school or gained a higher education in their hometowns. And considering that the majority of Leningraders / Petersburgers, Odessites and Bakuvians moved to the German capital in the late 1980s and early 1990s, most of my narrators were people aged 60 years and over. In such a selection, there were undoubted strengths. As Martina Löw notes, "The conversations with older people may be the best indicator for analyzing a city's logic" (2008: 38). Of course, Löw referred to a specific city in the UK, but nostalgia

is also a habitual topic for conversations among my informants who are acutely experiencing large-scale changes in their native cities. At the same time, many informal conversations included in the field notes, which took place in all four cities, reflect the opinions of people of all ages.

The method of discourse analysis was applied, first of all, while studying various kinds of texts of popular discourse: newspapers, magazines and popular journals, local history texts, and fiction. There is a huge body of narratives formed around St. Petersburg, Odessa and Baku (which I only partially touch upon in my work), through which myths and images of these cities have been constructed for hundreds of years. Turning to the ideas of Michel Foucault, I consider discourses "as practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak" (Foucault 1972: 49). In this regard, it was important to pay attention to the "rules and processes of appropriation of discourse". According to Foucault, "the property of discourse – in the sense of the right to speak, ability to understand and elicit immediate access to the corpus of already formulated statements, and the capacity to invest this discourse in decisions, institutions, or practices – is in fact confined (sometimes with the addition of legal sanctions) to a particular group of individuals" (Ibid.: 68).

In the case of my research, this group included all those who called themselves and were perceived by other members of one or another urban community as "true" Leningraders / Petersburgers, Odessites or Bakuvians. However, in this environment, you can find those who claim a greater right to the urban discourse. Who has the right of discursive formation of the urban habitus and images of unique cities? These are, primarily, numerous local historians, journalists and, in particular, writers of fiction, whose texts can be called influential and are, accordingly, widely known. One should also include leaders and activists of city clubs to the list of those who have more power to translate discourse into decisions and social institutions.

I have combined these ideas of Foucault with critical discourse analyses (CDA) of Norman Fairclough, who writes:

> "'discourse' might be seen as a sort of entity or 'object', but it is itself a complex set of relations including relations of communication between people who talk, write and in other ways communicate with each other, but also, for example, describe relations between concrete communicative events (conversations, newspaper, articles etc.) and more abstract and enduring complex discursive 'objects' (with their own complex relations)

> like languages, discourses and genres. But there are also relations between discourse and other such complex 'objects' including objects in the physical world, persons, power relations, and institutions, which are interconnected elements in social activity or praxis" (Fairclough 2010: 3).

Fairclough suggests that the meaning of texts is created, in part, in the process of their divergent interpretations. And in this sense, in the framework of numerous interpretations of the so-called *St Petersburg texts* (as well as the Odessa and Baku texts, whose authors use existing discourses and genres to create their texts), ideal urban types and habituses are created, often as anthropomorphized myths of unique cities that can create special imaginary communities of Petersburgers, Odessites and Bakuvians.

Another important Fairclough's idea is that hegemony is not only built on power but also formed in the process of negotiations and formation of a general consensus. All those (*albeit to varying degrees*) who can be recognized as a member of one or another imagined urban community have power over city discourses. Their opinions may be contradictory in some aspects, however the collected field material generally allows me to see a striking consensus in the perception of urban habitus and hometowns. This kind of consensus regarding a "right" urban habitus, as well as a special place and role of hometowns, not only in history but also in private lives of every Petersburger, Odessite, and Bakuvian – is the result of such negotiations between all social groups and influential actors.

Concluding the review of the methodology, I will mention again a sizeable amount visual materials. Personal videos and photos and all sorts of documentaries shown at events in the city clubs can tell a lot about the specifics of an imagined urban community. A reaction of the audience during a film screening and discussion can also reveal an attitude towards the hometown as well. Every club event, as well as the everyday life of every member of an imagined urban community, is accompanied by a set of visual symbols that recall their hometown. The discourse analysis of these kinds of visuals allows for a study of the specifics of preserving memory of the hometown in emigration. The same set of symbols can tell a lot about the influence of various kinds of texts on the perception of sociocultural landscapes, and highlight significant moments in the history of their hometowns.

CHAPTER II

IMPERIAL CITIES:
BETWEEN 'WESTERN' AND 'EASTERN' CITYSCAPES
AND
URBAN COMMUNITIES

Imperial Sites of Memory in the Post-Colonial Times

The histories of Saint Petersburg, Odessa and Baku are inseparably linked with the emergence of the Russian Empire[41] in the early 18th century, though each in their own unique way.

The first Russian emperor Peter the Great founded Saint Petersburg – a new capital for the empire he was creating (Bushkovitch 2001; Hughes 2002). Built at the mouth of the Neva River in May 1703, the city became "a kind of a symbol and a product" of the large-scale reforms he conducted (Semenov 1998: 3; Cracraft 2003: 75, 135-136; Anisimov 2003: 32-35). Peter I initiated creation of several cities, but "the unusual fate was awaiting only Petersburg – it has become a new Europeanized capital of the state". On the threshold of the city's tercentenary, Olga Ageyeva, the Russian researcher studying its history, said that despite very contradictory opinions of the city, "the capital on the Neva was a symbol of imperial Russia in the 18-19th centuries whatever approach and description is" (Ageyeva 1999: 5). Coincidentally, almost a century later, Empress Catherine II, who was "a true successor of Peter the Great – the Reformer of Russia" in the words of a great modern Russian philosopher (Kantor 1997: 12), signed a decree on the foundation of the city of Odessa on the Black Sea coast in the same spring month, on May 27, 1794 (Herlihy 1986: 7). Michael Hamm writes:

[41]The concept of "empire" is interpreted in different ways depending on context. In today's world the designation of any state as imperial has a strongly pronounced negative connotation. Certainly, in 1721, when Peter the Great declared himself the Emperor of Russia, the idea of an imperial system of government was positive. Much later, since approximately the second half of the 19th century, the criticism of the Russian Empire both by Russian intellectuals and from outside indicated its immaturity and hence its groundless pretensions of a 'civilizing mission'. Following Dominic Lieven, Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper, I consider the USSR an imperial state. However, such a designation in the text does not imply evaluative (negative or positive) meanings. It is used only to define the type of power and specificity of cultural dominance (Lievin 2003: 3-26, 288-342; Burbank & Cooper 2010: 1-22, 431-438).

> St Petersburg, created at the beginning of the eighteenth century, and Odessa, founded at the end of that century, stood as monuments to Imperial Russian expansion, symbols of the permanence of Russian presence on the Baltic and Black seas (Hamm 1986: 4).

Alexander I, grandson of famous Russian Empress Catherine II, who was also offered the title of "the Great" during her lifetime by appreciative subjects[42], extended his grip in the territory of modern Azerbaijan.[43]

Official poster of the Worldwide Club of Petersburgers composed of a copy of the portrait of Peter the Great by the Dutch painter Carel de Moor (1717) and the coat of arms of St Petersburg. St. Petersburg, the Worldwide Club of Petersburgers, January 2014. Photo by S. Huseynova

In 1806, ancient Baku became one of the cities of the Russian Empire.[44] Unlike Petersburg and Odessa, historians have no information about the exact date of Baku's

[42] (von Aretin 1998; Dixon 2001; Tchaikovsky 2012)
[43] (Swietochowski 1995: 3-10; Baddeley 2003: 57-72)
[44]Not to overload the text with information that is not essential for my research, I will only stress that reforms of three rulers in the 18th and 19th centuries played a key role in the formation and development of St Petersburg, Odessa and Baku as 'European cities'. It was Peter I the Great, who reigned 1689 - 1725; Catherine II the Great in 1762-1796; and Alexander II the Liberator, 1855-1881 (in addition to the literature

founding.[45] But when it comes to Baku, the fact that we are talking about a much more ancient city is less important than the evidence that, at the moment when the Russian Empire came into power, this small "Muslim town [...] For over ten centuries [...] had been part of the Muslim world" (Altstadt-Mirhadi 1986: 285). And only at the beginning of the 19th century did this part of the Muslim world also become the southern as well as the "Eastern" (in the context of the colonial Orientalist discourse) periphery of the Orthodox Christian Russian Empire.

All these cities had particular administrative, industrial, symbolic, and discursive statuses in the Russian Empire. St Petersburg – the "Northern Palmira" as it was known, was the capital of the whole empire, the largest industrial and cultural center for over two centuries. Odessa was branded the "Southern Palmira" in a discursive transfer of the capital-city image, the largest trading and, likewise, a cultural center[46]. Baku in the last third of the 19th and early 20th centuries aspired to the status of the oil capital and the largest industrial center of the empire. The imperial period (different for each of the cities) is considered, by numerous post-imperial and modern historians of these urban centers, local historians and writers, to be the time of the cities' rapid prosperity and booming growth. Many sites of memory in these cities – "where memory crystallizes and secretes itself" (Nora1989: 7) – as well as architectural urban landscapes of historic centers, transport the imagination of today's inhabitants of St Petersburg, Odessa and Baku back to the imperial period. Pride and love for their cities is associated with specific sites of memory – monuments and landmarks, central streets, and recreational places – whose unique landscapes were formed and habituated in the imperial period. If we consider the USSR to be the Soviet empire (as a kind of continuation of the preceding state tradition), such "imperial" sites of memory, important for uniting members of urban communities, have grown in number during its existence.

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cited in the text, see also: Kappeler 2001: 247-327; Freeze, ed., 2009: 100-268; Waldron 2011; Hosking 2001: 211-352).

[45]Sarah Ashurbeyli, one of the most respected historians in Baku, says that ancient human settlements were located on the territory of the city, and Baku as 'an ancient city' is believed to be at least two thousand years old. For more information, see: (Ashurbeyli 1992: 35-42). At the same time, "The earliest architectural monument with an inscription indicating the construction date" is the minaret of Muhammad Mosque dating back to 1078/1079A.D (Bretanitsky 1970: 15).

[46]Interestingly, attributing special 'European' status to these two cities has not prevented the emergence of poetic imagery referring to the East Palmyra, a city on the territory of modern Syria, which is remembered in history for its legends of Queen Zenobia and its magnificent architecture. Catherine II, in turn, was called "Northern Semiramis" (possibly by Voltaire), as she was compared with the semi-legendary Assyrian queen (see: Ashukin&Ashukina1955: 492; Burlak&Iskyul 2006: 856-857).

Monument to the founders of Odessa. The central place in the composition is occupied by the Empress Catherine the Great. It was laid in 1894, marked the centenary of the city. In 1920 it was dismantled. In 2007, the monument was restored to its original location. Odessa, October 2016, Photo by S. Huseynova

These sites of memory are important because, despite the "consciousness of a break with the past" or sensations "that memory has been torn", "a sense of historical continuity [still] persists" in these sites of memory. According to Pierre Nora, "there are lieux de memoire, sites of memory, because there are no longer milieus de memoire, real environments of memory" (Ibid.). There is no longer a memory of many social groups (milieus) that had long enhanced the vibrancy of the socio-cultural space and atmosphere of these cities, described by contemporary writers, public intellectuals, and local historians. These groups, assigned essential roles in contemporary urban discourse, included: the "brilliant" gentle nobility of Petersburg of the late 18-19th centuries, *raznochintsy* (Russian intellectuals not of gentle birth) of the post-reform period[47]– cult figures of Russian culture and the imperial epoch of Russian nationalism, tsarist officials who were characters of numerous critical and comic opuses, and other social milieus that have long been non-existent. In the context of the Petersburg discourse (whether positive or critical), "genuine" Petersburg disappeared with these milieus. Then the time of

[47]Here, it should be stressed that the reforms of Tsar Alexander II in the second half of the 19th century played a key role in the history of all three cities, promoting rapid growth of their population, industrial development, etc. The reforms also had a significant effect on municipality. The major event in this "era of great reforms" in the history of the Russian Empire was the emancipation of the Russian serfs in 1861, which promoted rapid urban population growth (D: Eklof, ed., 1994; Eschment 1994; Chistyakov, Novitskaya, ed., 1998).

Leningrad begins, mostly as the history of losses[48]. But it is post-war Leningrad which the *vital memory*[49] (*lebendiges Gedächtnis*) of the modern urban community is associated with the surviving milieus of Leningrad's inhabitants (middle-aged and older generations), even as they experience the process of transnationalization in the post-Soviet period.

In the context of contemporary discourse on nineteenth century "brilliant Odessa", special importance is attached to the milieus of the founders and builders of the city – foreign noble intellectuals and eminent royal grandees, merchants and wealthy entrepreneur-philanthropists, smugglers and bandits, etc. All these contexts that shaped the face of historical Odessa also no longer exist. But the city is full of sites of memory that recall the 19th century and allow us to construct images of continuity in time and history. Discourse on Soviet Odessa of 1920s and early 1930s is more positive than the discourse of St Petersburg. It was during this period when the group of writers who brought fame to the city, created its unique literary image and made important contributions to the process of the construction of the Odessan myth as it was being formed. But the following Soviet period (post-war) is rather a time of losses after all. Actually, the main innovation of the Soviet period, introduced into the toponymy of sites of memory in St Petersburg and Odessa, is the memory of the Second World War. This is the most significant Soviet site of memory, which is still directly related to the social group of survivors of the siege of Leningrad (*blokadniki*), heroes of the defense and liberation of Odessa, and to the war veterans at large.

The most important process for Baku, as the only current capital among all three cities, is the nationalization of the urban landscape and memory. In this context, the memories of various social and ethnic groups that inhabited the city during the period of

[48]Petersburg historians Vladlen Izmozyk and Natalia Lebina point to another important reason, in their opinion, for neglecting the Soviet past of the city, which is a lack of academic literature concerning that period. The three-hundred-year anniversary of 2003 clarified the discrepancy, as it became "a kind of litmus test, [that] revealed the specific orientation of the interest of scholars and public intellectuals in St Petersburg history. In most cases, the anniversary literature was devoted to the imperial St Petersburg. The last third of the city life remained and remains in the shadows. [...] Such inattention to the Soviet period of the life of the city on the Neva is quite understandable. Prerevolutionary historians have created such a large body of academic literature that now on its basis it is possible by slightly switching the accents to compose more and more works on the brilliant imperial St Petersburg" (Izmozik & Lebina 2010: 3).

[49]Memory based on direct communication, according to Aleida Assmann, can be called the *short-term memory of society* (*Kurzzeitgedächtnis*). It is about a type of social memory limited *by the memory of three generations.* Although, "it has a media basis in the form of books, photo albums or diaries, these resources cannot significantly expand the range of vital memory. A vital one can be called a memory that in a sufficiently intimate context actualizes the past in a conversation" (Assmann 2006: 26-28).

the empire are quickly forgotten. Tsarist officials and military administrators, numerous groups of Armenians, Russians, Georgians and Jews who lived in the city are left out of the official commemoration policy. Its main objects remain the Turkic Muslim Azerbaijanis, the eminent entrepreneur-philanthropists, and the first "western" intellectuals *(zapadniki)* – writers and nationalists. In today's dominant discourse on the city, they were the groups that formed its unique image. For the contemporary milieu of Bakuvians, the Soviet postwar period is largely considered the heyday of their community, an urban lifestyle, and the rise of culture. Therefore, the "controversial" Soviet legacy is inevitably accompanied by a much more positive assessment by Bakuvians, in contrast to that of Odessites and especially Petersburgers.

What unites these three different cases? According to Pierre Nora, in all three the "national memory" as "a recent phenomenon" cannot yet supersede "various group memories" in the multiethnic urban milieus of St Petersburg, Odessa and Baku – cities formed in the postwar period that persist while undergoing a period of transnationalization. However, the imagination of the **"**brilliant" past of these cities, aimed at constituting the borders of modern urban communities, "is no longer the guarantee of [their] future"[50] (Nora 1998: 632, 634). The rapidly changing composition of the population, mass emigration of native inhabitants (carriers of urban habitus and social capital) of St Petersburg, Odessa and Baku, as well as processes of nationalization in these previously multicultural and multi-religious urban centers promote the disruption of the urban social milieus.

Rapid changes also occur in the urban environment and the socio-cultural landscape, within which these communities can be reproduced and pass their traditions, the memory of symbolically significant sites, patterns of behavior, and their urban habitus down to future generations. A work of imagination of the inhabitants of St Petersburg, Odessa and Baku, as well as modern communication technologies enable them to recreate those scattered communities in the new transnational format. But this format is not well suited for the reproduction of these urban social milieus in the future.

In this chapter I will try to show the specificity of constructing urban spaces and architectural landscapes, which are discursively endowed with features of uniqueness. Historical aspects of urban development and urbanization processes interest me, in

[50]Although these urban communities, as I define them through the categories of social capital, urban habitus and a work of imagination, are still "alive", unlike the "dead" nation "understood by Renan". Nora talks about Renan's nation, in this case (Ibid.).

addressing the question – what discursive resources do public intellectuals and scholars have to construct myths of the uniqueness of their hometowns and communities found within them? I allow myself to follow a general line of reasoning, to then focus separately on each of the cities and communities.

There will be a need to focus on three key aspects to understand the specifics of these three urban spaces and architectural landscapes, as well as cultural contexts within which the modern communities of inhabitants of St Petersburg, Odessa and Baku were constructed. *The first one* refers to the debate regarding the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union belonging to either the *Eastern* or *Western civilization*. To consider this aspect in the context of contemporary postcolonial theory, we should focus not only (and not so much) on the problems of political and economic domination, but rather on cultural and discursive boundaries and phenomena. St Petersburg, Odessa and Baku are assigned a special role in the context of these discussions. Inhabitants of St Petersburg, Odessa and Baku have constructed their own original discourses of cultural and civilizational identities and boundaries.

The second aspect, as a logical continuation of the first one, is to understand the specificity of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union in terms of territorial extent and urbanization processes. This aspect can be formulated through the claim that there are only a few "real cities" in the former Soviet Union and, accordingly, urban communities. As for the 18th - early 20th centuries, there were only two or three of these cities. My goal is not to prove the truth or falsity of these statements. It is more important to see this specificity through the eyes of inhabitants of St Petersburg, Odessa and Baku, to study the process of discursive construction of boundaries between them as "true urban communities" and the vast rural world or the provinces.

Finally, *the third aspect* refers to imperial specificity of the formation of extremely mixed populations (ethnically and religiously) of those cities, and how the memory of the past of these cities, including the imperial past, is actualized today, how actual are the imperial sites of memory, and how (and if) their decolonization and nationalization are carried out.

To the East of Europe:
Petersburg, Odessa and Baku
as Spaces of the "Western" Way of Life in the Russian Empire

Almost all Western Europeans who visited pre-Petrine Russia, left us descriptions of the country which they believed to be absolutely "barbaric" and to have little in common with the "European civilization" (Malia 1999: 3-10; Neumann, 1999: 65-112; Ageyev, 1999: 32-36). According to David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye: "One of the most common Renaissance perceptions of Russia involved its Asian identity". Besides its geographic location, "the exotic costumes" of Moscovian visitors to Europe, and "despotic power" established in Muscovy were also important. Outward discrepancies were so conspicuous that it became obvious for Europeans "that the eastern European realm was no less Oriental than Persia or Cathay" (Schimmelpenninck van der Oye 2010: 2). Europeans regarded "Russians as Asians" upon its very first collisions "with an exotic land lying to the East of Europe" (Schimmelpenninck van der Oye 2002: 250).[51]

At the very beginning of the 18th century, it took Russia only over two decades to "become an international actor almost equal to France, England, or Austria, and ahead of declining Spain, Holland, or rising Prussia" (Malia Ibid: 21). However, it would be an overstatement to say that the reforms of Peter the Great and his successors (especially Catherine II) led to any rapid change in European/Western notions of Russia's cultural and civilizational[52] backwardness. From a perspective of Europe (or more broadly West), the Russian Empire always raised serious doubts about its pretensions to Europeanness. And in post-Petrine 18th and 19th centuries, it was most commonly seen as a 'wild', 'Asian', exotic country. This empire seemed to be 'an Oriental despotism' to French aristocrat and traveler Marquis Astolphe de Custine who visited Russia and felt 'a sly

[51]Vera Tolz noted that as far back as the late 19th century, the Russian orientalist Barthold came to the conclusion, "that modern perception of the East-West divide fully crystallized during the Enlightenment". Tolz concludes that from now on, "for Western Europe even Russia was often part of the East" (Tolz 2011: 54).

[52]When analyzing the events of the 18th-19th centuries and claims of the Russian Empire's status of "the great power", Neumann draws attention to "the existence of a formal standard of civilization in international law" associated with the type of government. "A state can be considered great due to management that seems enviable to others". As, for example, the type of management in the Netherlands that enraptured Peter the Great. On the contrary, "From the very first contacts between Russia and Europe there was the despotic rule in Russia. In the 19th-20th centuries it was authoritarian or even totalitarian" (Neumann 2008: 153-156) (see also: Uffelmann 1999: 29-31; Ricarda 2012: 50-56).

look of an Asian'[53] on him as well as German philosopher Karl Marx who never travelled there (Schimmelpenninck, Ibid: 249-252).

Regarding Russian intellectuals' views on their own Empire, the situation was more complicated. During the 18th – 19th centuries, the question of the Russian Empire's civilizational location was one of the most important and the most painful. Since Peter the Great, all subsequent generations of the Russian intellectuals have wondered whether they could regard their state as European or Eastern, Asian, special or different, i.e. distinct from the West and Europe[54]. According to Liah Greenfeld: "The awareness of the West was forced on Russia by Peter the Great, who, as in everything he did, allowed no time for getting prepared for the encounter." A certain part of the elite (primarily the tsar's closest associates and retinue) initially considered the West "as an absolute and incontestable model, the only possible standard of behavior" (Greenfeld 1992: 223).

Founded by the tsar, St Petersburg has become a symbol of the successful European integration.[55] "Everything: industry, trade, science, literature, education, the beginning and organization of social life", Fyodor Dostoyevsky wrote in 1847, "everything lives only due to and is supported by St Petersburg".[56] The first generations of Westerners believed that following Peter's military victories over the Swedes and large-scale reforms, Russia had become a European power. Although these ideas still existed at the end of the18th and 19th centuries, disappointment with their own achievements came quickly enough. When describing this process, Greenfeld concludes that realizing non-correspondence to the ideal image of the West "gave way to ressentiment,[57] the rejection of the West based on envy and the realization of the all-too-evident, and therefore unbearable inferiority" (Ibid: 234).

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[53] According to the French aristocrat who visited Russia more than a hundred years after the era of Peter the Great's reforms in 1839: "If today's Russia is one of the most interesting countries in the world, the reason is a combination of extreme barbarism [...] and refined civilization borrowed by the eclectic government from the foreign powers". Civilization, according to the Marquis, was observed only among some members of the Russian elite. As for others: "The expression in the eyes of the Russian commoners is special: this is a roguish look of Asians. When you meet them, it seems to you that you are not in Russia but in Persia" (de Custine, 1996: 7, 121).

[54] About the processes of Westernization of the elite in the Russian Empire, see also: (Marker 2009).

[55] And one of the most famous of Peter the Great's decrees called for compulsory shaving of beards. This procedure has stuck in descendants' memory as a symbolic act of violent familiarization of Russians (primarily nobles) with the European way of life (Hughes 2004).

[56] Quoted from: (Burlak, et.al, 2001: 575).

[57] Greenfeld defines the concept 'ressentiment' as follows: "Every society importing the foreign idea of the nation inevitably focused on the source of importation – an object of imitation by definition – and reacted to it. Because the model was superior to the imitator in the latter's own perception (its being a model implied that), and the contact itself more often than not served to emphasize the latter's inferiority, the reaction commonly assumed the form of ressentiment [...] (existential envy)..." (Ibid: 15).

The question the Russian intellectuals asked themselves in the 19th century was formulated entirely in the spirit of Orientalism described by Edward Said much later, during the Cold War: is Russia Europe or the East? Is the country barbaric and underdeveloped, or nevertheless has it achieved a certain success and is it quickly or slowly catching up to Europe? Views of Europeans on Russia can also be interpreted in terms of orientalism. Said stated that: "The Orient was almost a European invention" (Said 2003: 1). According to him:

> Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between 'the Orient' and (most of the time) 'the Occident'. [...] Orientalism can be discussed and analyzed [...] as a western style of dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient (Ibid: 2-3).

Domination through building a hierarchical 'civilized – barbaric' model that corresponds to 'Western – Eastern' can be seen in the case of Europe-Russia relations (Malia Ibid: 6). But the transfer of Said's ideas to the experience of relations requires still more serious reflection, as Said focused on the relations of cultural and political dominance established between 'First' and 'Third worlds' (Becker 1991: 47-49; Etkind 2002: 265-266).

Said did not explore the 'Second world' (the present ex-Soviet Space) and Imperial Russian Orientalism.[58] Without denying the conventionality of this differentiation between the 'worlds', I would like to stress the difference between the situations by using these categories. Otherwise, as Etkind notes, if the concept of Orientalism is applied directly, the Russian Empire is found either in the 'First' or the 'Third' world (Etkind Ibid: 266). Such an approach can only lead to reduction of the specific and complex history of the Russian imperial context.

From the time of Peter the Great, Europe (as the West) certainly had the power of cultural and civilizational (if we talk about the type of government) domination over the Russian Empire. In the words of Malia: "entails nothing so recondite as claiming Russia to be a 'construct' of Western mind" (Malia Ibid: 9). However, in my opinion, this is the context in which the process of orientalization of the Russian Empire and later the Soviet Union and the ex-Soviet Space should be considered. It is also important to emphasize

[58]According to Bruce Grant's well-grounded opinion: "Few people ever identified with the categories of First, Second, and Third world, though they reigned among scholars for decades" (Grant 2012: 2).
It should also be noted that almost all the studies carried out in the context of the post-colonial approach reproduce the same research framework for the relationship of the 'First' and 'Third' worlds (see: McLeod, ed., 2007; Ashcroft, et. al., 2013).

that not only European, but also Russian intellectuals played a key role in the course of this discursive orientalization of Russia by the European West. The situation of cultural dominance emerged at precisely the moment when they had adopted Western standards as the only correct ones.

Alexander Etkind persists in his idea of 'internal colonization' by saying that Russian peasants were an image of an exotic different thing and an object of colonization for the Europeanized Russian elite (Etkind 2002; Etkind 2011; Etkind, et. al., 2012). This approach can be strengthened through focusing on the relationship between the European city of St Petersburg (and later Odessa) and its rural periphery. Before the 19th century St Petersburg and Moscow were "the only civilized cities in the land" (Brower 1990: 1)[59]. But in the same century the list of 'the truly European' (or modern) cities (Moscow was not that kind of a city) had gradually been expanding, and Odessa had a special role in it.

At the same time, the same Russian intellectuals of the 19th century, who were experiencing its nationalism in the form of ressentiment, felt confident as carriers of the European civilizing mission in "their own East"[60] (Campbell 2002: 312-318; Baberowski 2003: 28-43; Vulpius 2012). In a sense, this East incorporated the lands regained from the Ottoman Empire on the northern coast of the Black Sea, where the province of Novorossiysk (New Russia), along with the European city of Odessa, was created. The name itself, which was chosen for the city under unknown circumstances (Deribas 2012: 15), refers to the ancient Greek European tradition. Catherine the Great thus approved the return of these territories to the bosom of the European civilization. Here, I used Vera Tolz's metaphor, which indicates that the Russian Orientalists of the late 19th – early 20th centuries attempted to overcome the East-West dichotomy (Tolz 2011: 54-57).

Muslim Khanates in the South Caucasus were also a part of the Russian East, and one of the oriental cities where imperial administration deployed its civilizing ideas was Baku. I will preface that I do not think the transfer of conflict in the dichotomy of 'a European city versus a traditional rural periphery' to the southern outskirts of the Empire was random. For Europeanized Bakuvians who perceived Western ideas and images

[59]Here not only the fact that other cities differed little from rural settlements and were also inhabited by unfree peasants is important. Specificity of relations between the government and cities ruled by the tsar's officials, and possessed of the minimum rights to self-government even after the reforms of Catherine II and Alexander II, is also significant. (Hittle 1979).

[60] Here I use a metaphor of Vera Tolz, saying that Russian orientalists of the end of the XIX-beginning of the XX centuries made an effort to overcome the East-West dichotomy (Tolz 2011: 54-57). According to Schimmelpenninck van der Oye: "Russian orientalism is a complicated question". However, one can add that Russia's own Orientalist academic tradition (*vostokovedeniye*) was established in Russia in the 19th century. One of the most significant and well-known oriental studies research centers was located exactly in Russia's first 'European' city – St Petersburg (Schimmelpenninck van der Oye 2012: 153-198).

through interpretation of the Russian intellectuals, people living in rural areas, who needed to be brought up to date, also eventually became othered and exoticized.

Returning to the ideas of the Russian intellectuals of the 18th-19th centuries, I reinforce that postcolonial theory seems to be relevant to understanding the Russian Empire as well, but requires additional and serious theoretical and methodological reflections. Discourses of East and West became influential among the Russian elite in the era of founding a new imperial capital. A central role was assigned to interpretations of Peter the Great's activities in civilizational reflections of the Russian intellectuals in the Russian Empire.[61] In the 19th century representatives of the elite, by and large, proposed two radical responses to the existential question, designed by Orientalism, of whether Russia is East or West. And, of course, the personal views and preferences of each great tsar's administrator, thinker, journalist or a writer determined the content of the proposed response.

Although many (but not all) "Westerners" were often skeptical about Europeanness of their Empire, they dreamed of seeing it "genuinely" Western and civilized. They saw the future of Russia in its Westernization and modernization in accordance with the European model. They praised Peter's reforms and were proud of their capital St Petersburg. In contrast, the Russian nationalists, who formed their views as part of the Slavophile ideology in the 19th century, attached great importance to discrepancies with the Western world and constructed their own ("unique") way and place in the world for the Russian Empire. But this unique way also implied constant comparison with the ideal and unattainable image of "the other" – Europe, and therefore subjected European and "alien" (for Russian) cities St Petersburg and Odessa to regular criticism. According to Greenfeld's well-grounded opinion:

> "Both Westernism and Slavophilism were steeped in *ressentiment*. Both arose out of the realization of Russia's inferiority and a revulsion against its humiliating reality. In Slavophilism, this revulsion was transformed into excessive self-

[61]Conflicting views of contemporaries and prominent intellectuals of the 18th-19th centuries on the activities of Peter the Great and the legacy of his reforms, as well as some modern interpretations of these views can be found in the anthology Peter the Great (Burlaky, et. Al, 2001). In addition to the cited literature concerning definition of Russia′s role and place in the East-West dichotomy, I should mention articles by Vera Tolz, David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye and Derek Offord with the telling titles The West, The East and The People (see: Leatherbarrow & Offord, eds., 2010: 195-262).

admiration. In Westernism, the very same sentiment led to the generalized revulsion against the existing world and to the desire to destroy" (Ibid: 265).[62]

Running a little ahead, I would like to stress that the basic positions of *pro et contra* survived the first Westerners and Slavophiles, and Eurasians replaced them in the early 20th century with their impressive intellectual attempts of discourse hybridization of "Eastern (steppe and nomadic) barbarism" and "Western civilization". Evaluation of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union's history is still polarizing and inherently refers to the same opposition of Westerners and some "special way and place" for Russia in the world. According to Alexander Etkind, this is still relevant in the modern situation:

> "Studying Imperial Russia, scholars have produced two stories. One concerns a great country that competes successfully, though unevenly, with other European powers, produces brilliant literature, and stages unprecedented social experiments. The other story is one of economic backwardness, unbridled violence, misery, illiteracy, despair, and collapse" (Etkind 2011: 1).

Thus, the most heated debates in the 18th-19th centuries related to cultural/civilizational differences. Intellectuals who inhabited imperial St Petersburg were always at the center of these discussions. By comparison, intellectual Odessites who constructed discourses and myths about their special city were much more confident in its "genuine" Europeanness. Their interest in these discussions was appreciably lower. Odessa can be called neither the center of Westernism, nor, especially, Slavophilia. The belief of Odessites in their Europeanness was too strong to cause controversy and much debate. On the contrary, Baku and Bakuvians always remembered the "oriental origin" of the city, despite considering themselves as a Europeanized community. They did not forget the fact that their city is located on "Eastern soil". Westernization for the community of Bakuvians occurred much later in Soviet history and was reflected in the popular discourse about an unchanged cosmopolitanism of this urban community.

These three cities and urban communities should be assigned a special place and role in the discussion about the civilizational identity of the Russian Empire. The question of whether Russia is East or West, Europe or Asia could never be resolved unambiguously. As a result, the debate about Russia's position in the civilizational East-

[62] To read more about Russian nationalism in the context of ideas of Westernism and Slavophilia, see: (Greenfeld, Ibid: 264-274; Becker 1991; Rabow-Edling 2006: 73-100; Lebedewa 2008; Engelstein 2009: 99-150)

West dichotomy has been going on for at least three hundred years. During this time, many debaters have drawn attention to the problems of cultural as well as religious and ethnic heterogeneity of the imperial space. This imperial space was also heterogeneous from the standpoint of the degree of its Westernization. Therefore, specificity of searching for answers to this question should be considered in terms of cultural discreteness of the imperial space.

When studying specificity in formation of urban landscapes and communities of inhabitants of St Petersburg, Odessa and Baku, one should wonder what kind of life, what kind of spatial organization and discourse were generated in the space of these cities and by intellectuals – members of these urban communities. It must be remembered that rural periphery remained traditional and not westernized in the empire. The same statement applies to almost all other imperial cities. Real attempts of any large-scale (re-)construction of the space in the European style affected only a few imperial cities and rural settlements (German colonists (Etkind 2011: 126-135)). During the 18th century, Petersburg was Russia's sole center of westernization. Foundation of Odessa was a new stage of development of Novorossiysk's newly acquired territories, and this city repeated, in a certain sense, the experience of St Petersburg and was also built initially as a European one. Finally, reconstruction of Baku is an example of the Russian Empire's civilizing mission in the East.

Thus, the pre-Soviet history of all three cities – St Petersburg, Odessa and Baku – represents attempts to westernize the Russian Empire into something similar, albeit in very different ways. All these cities are coastal, and from the time of Peter the Great the process of regaining "access to the sea" also involved parallel Europeanization of imperial possessions and the "people" breaking up the quote in this way is confusing it seems like it's putting into question whether or not the inhabitants were people inhabiting them. Petersburg was founded as closely as possible to the north-western European countries; Odessa was the Empire's second large-scale endeavour to construct a large European port city on the coast, and in closest proximity to the Mediterranean Sea. Various goals of founding these two 'European cities' in Asiatic Russia had a direct impact on the communities of people that inhabited them. Baku existed before the Empire emerged. Furthermore, the Caspian Sea[63], in contrast to the Baltic and Black Seas, linked the Russian Empire not to the West, but the East, with the Persian Empire. In the case of Baku, it is more a question of claiming status in the Empire as an intermediary in trade

[63]Or, strictly speaking, it is the largest salt lake in the world, which has gained the epithet of "the sea" because of its size.

between East and West. This city needed to be modified and reconstructed rather than to be built on an "empty" place. And here the civilizing mission and calling for the Russian Empire were included in Westernization of the Muslim East.

Debates about Russia's "civilizational" location, which were topical since the time of Peter the Great until the fall of the Empire, found their direct (material) reflection in the socio-cultural and architectural landscape of these three cities. Communities of inhabitants of St Petersburg, Odessa and Baku emerged in response to the westernization efforts and spatial organizations of the Russian Empire's authorities. The boundaries between natives of St Petersburg, Odessa and Baku and an array of the Empire's rural population are not simply lines of distinction between 'genuine' citizens and village settlers. In urban discourses this experience is also re-presented as a clash of two different worlds, two different 'cultures' and 'civilizations'. The most ambitious attempts to overcome these boundaries were made in the course of mass Soviet urbanization following the collapse of the Russian Empire. But can the Soviet project be regarded as successful?

Invasion of the Soviet: Old Centres and New Districts

Having come to power in the former Russian Empire, the Bolsheviks intended to implement an ambitious program for the country's rapid modernization, which might have excited envy even in Peter the Great.[64] Since the 1920s and up until the Second World War, the new regime sought a radical reconstruction of state institutions and customary social relations. Since the late 1920s to early 1930s, collectivization of

[64]Of course, attempts to modernize the economy and social relations had been made before the Bolsheviks came to power (see, for example: Davies 1991; Gregory 1994; Kangaspuro & Smith, eds., 2006). And, in a sense, some of the modernization trends dating to prior October 1917 developed and continued after the revolution. However, the plans of the Bolsheviks were much more radical and involved massive and extremely fast reconstruction of industry and the class society inherited from imperial Russia. As far back as the Civil War in 1920, Vladimir Lenin initiated and supervised an ambitious plan for electrifying the whole country – "GOELRO plan" – abbreviation for the "State commission for electrification of Russia" (Haumann 1974; Leversedge 1977). Perhaps, it was that electrification program that later served as a kind of prototype for the future five-year plans that replaced the New Economic Policy (NEP) in 1928 (Fitzpatrick 1991), and marked the beginning of the formation of the administrative-command economy (Gregory 2004: 1-22, 153-182 ; Litvin & Keep 2005: 52-57, 111-112). All these large-scale social and economic transformations (collectivization, industrialization and others) had a powerful impact on the cities.

agriculture and rapid industrialization[65] became the major components of the Bolshevik policy. In the context initiated under this program of large-scale changes, Soviet architects and city planners developed concepts and models for the development of rural settlements, building new cities and reconstruction of old ones. In the early 1930s, radical avant-garde projects of the 1920s were replaced by an eclectic Stalinist neoclassicism and Empire style – socialist realism embodied in architectural forms. The most significant trend in the post-Stalin period was the massive construction of *Khrushchevka:* five-storey apartment buildings and large standardized bedroom-community suburbs. Continuing rapid urban population growth (1960-1980) propelled the growing importance of urban centers as the most comfortable areas for living. As a result, the Soviet period was a time of enormous change throughout the country and, specifically, for St Petersburg, Odessa and Baku. Since the collapse of the USSR, these cities and urban communities are undergoing reconstruction of architectural landscapes and deep transformation.

Three aspects seem to be most important for understanding the specifics of the Soviet and post-Soviet periods in the life of all Russian empire-period cities (especially St Petersburg, Odessa and Baku). *The first aspect* is a large-scale architectural reconstruction, aligned with rapid growth of the areas and population of the cities, which had turned them into major urban centers even prior to the establishment of Soviet power. In addition to the intervention of new architectural styles in the space of the old centers, the emergence of new administrative and vast dormitory suburbs, ruralization of the population, and many other developments became important to the cities' urban reconstruction.

The most important symbolic shift is a perception of the cities as strictly divided into "old" and "new" parts. Current inhabitants of St Petersburg, Odessa and Baku consider all districts of these three cities that were built before the establishment of the Soviet power to be old historic centers. These are the most prestigious parts of the cities to live. Old centers are the 'genuine' Petersburg, Odessa and Baku. They are not only places to rest and to take a promenade, where the vast majority of cafes, restaurants and other urban amenities and attractions are concentrated. The old city is also an area that creates conditions to reproduce a continuous daily connection of current communities

[65]There is a voluminous literature on Soviet collectivization and industrialization. The author of the most large-scale research project implemented for more than three decades is Professor Bob Davies (University of Birmingham, UK). His six-volume work demonstrates the close connection between collectivization and industrialization. The work describes the Bolshevik policy during the first two five-year plans, which led to famine in many rural areas, many victims, mass population displacements and the creation of the Soviet-type economy by the mid-1930s (see, especially: Davies 1980; Davies 1996; Davies & Wheatcroft 2003; Davies 2014).

with their origins. When hurrying on business or simply strolling in their old cities, St Petersburg, Baku and Odessa inhabitants are simultaneously in the discursive spaces of Pushkin and Dostoevsky, Katayev and Akhmatova, and merchant-philanthropists and oil barons of the 19th century. The old city is not only architectural monuments, or streets and buildings. These are also the places where the unique history of these cities was created. The mere existence of the old centers allows for constructing myths and discourses of the uniqueness of St Petersburg, Odessa and Baku natives' communities.

These urban communities could not have appeared and integrated in the Stalinist neoclassical skyscrapers and featureless bedroom suburbs. Unique architectural landscape, specific history, old courtyards, buildings and streets – urban communities were created in these spaces. Without their existence there would not be enough imagination to construct discourses of St Petersburg, Odessa and Baku inhabitants' uniqueness. Uniqueness of the urban socio-cultural landscape is a prerequisite for the formation of these communities. At the same time, the discourse of the old city centers' uniqueness is based on their contrast with the Soviet architectural heritage. The appearance of Soviet housing developments has led to the division into the old (*genuine*) city and the new one (*an error of history*). Eclectic and tasteless Stalinist neoclassicism, monotonous housing developments in the Soviet suburbs, as well as post-Soviet new buildings that played important roles in this process remain beyond the borders of memory. In contrast, the survived old centers enable again and again the reconstruction and maintenance of myths and discourses of uniqueness of both the cities and inhabitant communities.

The second aspect is the specificity of the relationship with the imperial and, after the collapse of the USSR, the Soviet memory in these cities. In other words, relation to historical space relies on deconstruction of previous interpretations and the search for new ones of the "old" sites of memory recognized by the Bolshevik regime. Or, more explicitly, the impact of Soviet monumental, cultural and national policy on the reconstruction of urban spaces, which fills them with new symbols. Commemoration of the Second World War events (especially for Petersburg and Odessa) and then, nationalization and desovietization of the cities (primarily for Baku) in the aftermath of the Soviet Union's collapse, exemplify relationships between new regimes and the previous sites of memory, and the construction of new ones.

Finally, *the third aspect* requires attention to the processes of transformation of the status of the cities in the Soviet and post-Soviet cultural and political contexts. Petersburg lost status as the political and administrative capital, as well as its authentic

name, and intellectuals that inhabited it tried to compensate for this loss by reconstructing the image of the city as a center of culture. Odessa, in turn, lost status as the trading capital in the Empire's south, and the largest and most developed city of the Novorossiysk region. It became just one of the major Ukrainian cities.

Odessites also compensated for this loss of status by building the city's image as the capital of humor. Baku, in contrast, became the capital of the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic, which implied a more consistent nationalization of urban cultural landscape than in Odessa. Simultaneously, all three cities became provincial compared with capital Moscow.

All these changes occurred in a situation where the border between the USSR and the West turned into the "iron curtain". The entire Soviet Union was the Red East, eager to outperform the capitalist West in all areas, and weighing against its rival became the only key criterion of Soviet achievements. At the same time, the Red East also has its "real" East – the "Asian periphery". A special role was assigned to Baku – as vitrine city representing the progress of the civilizing mission of Soviet socialism in the East. In this situation, new versions of Orientalist discourse and retrospective notions and reconstructions of the historical role and significance of these cities emerged. After the collapse of the USSR, these discourses and notions have changed again, and the relations between Russia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and the West have changed as well. Petersburg and Odessa have reclaimed the role of the most Western cities in their countries. In the case of Baku, one can observe attempts to privatize the role of a cultural or "civilizational" bridge between the two worlds.

Architecture of Socrealism Epoch and City Planning

"In fact, the whole history of urban development of the first revolutionary years is the story of planning cities of the future, cities of the era of socialism", wrote the famous scholar researching the Soviet avant-garde of the 1920s, art historian Vigdariya Khazanova.[66] The period from 1917 to the early 1930s was a time of experimentation,

[66]In her works, Khazanova wrote about certain trends that had already emerged in the early 20th century in the Russian Empire′s architectural environment and progressed after the revolution (″garden-city″ as a social utopia) (Khazanova 1970: 3-15) (see also: French 1995: 24 27). On the post-revolutionary avant-garde and the style that emerged prior to the 1930s, constructivism, concepts of Sotsgorod, formation of Stalinist neoclassical architecture (″post-constructivism″) see also: (French 1995; Chan-Magomedov 1993; Chan-Magomedov, 1996; Chan-Magomedov 2001).

development of different and often quite radical architectural projects.[67] The key factors of these changes were nationalization of land and, of course, a much stronger role for the government, which sought to quickly monopolize the role of a construction client. Their new projects and architectural structures were, stylistically, constructivist avant-garde.[68] In Leningrad, Odessa and Baku the turn to constructivism occurred in the mid-1920s. And though "the history of avant-garde covers a short period of time – about a decade" (Kirikov & Stiglitz, 2008: 9), all three cities featured buildings that have added a certain variety to the pre-revolutionary architectural landscapes. Petersburg, a city renowned for its strict classicism, which replaced the lush Baroque in the 1760s, notably resisted new styles (Johansen & Lisowski 1979: 110-165).

As far back as the beginning of the 20th century, Art Nouveau in St Petersburg competed with neoclassicism, whose influence can also be seen in the 1920s.[69] "In St Petersburg, the avant-garde architecture was not given due public recognition. Innovative trends were seen as alien phenomena in the city with deep classical traditions for many years." Currently, about 80 buildings that embody the constructivist heritage of the 1920s and early 1930s do not play an important role in representations of the city as architectural monuments, despite being protected by the state (Kirikov & Stiglitz, 2008: 9-10). In general, these buildings do not affect the old city center formed prior to the revolution.

In Odessa, which was hard hit during the Civil War, there were practically no new constructions until the 1920s. But since 1926, the Soviet development of the city center had begun atop the destroyed sites. These are mostly constructivist apartment buildings. The most significant buildings of this period were resorts, recreation centers and some institutions (Lermontovsky resort, Dzerzhinsky recreation center, Technological Institute and others.) (Timofeyenko, 1983). These buildings also did not affect the integrity of the old city, and are not included in the discourse on Odessa, as unique architectural city-monuments.

Constructivism had the greatest impact on the landscape of Baku. Constructivist architecture was hardly represented so completely, widely, skillfully and diversely anywhere else in the Soviet Union as in Baku, where it was used to form a new

[67]The symbolic moment of this period was Le Carbusier's visits to Moscow. The prominent modernist architect called the USSR a "factory of blueprints" and participated in the Palace of Soviet Competition (1932 year) (Cohen 1992).

[68]"Constructivism is often used as an integrating concept, combining conditionally all the forms of the avant-garde" (Kirikov & Stiglitz, 2008: 18).

[69]This "competition" has left its mark on the architectural landscape of St Petersburg and Moscow – the two largest cities of the Russian Empire – to the greatest extent (Revzin 1992; Borisova & Sternin 1998; Lukomsky 2003; Kostylev & Perestoronina 2007; Kirikov 2011).

appearance. It is not surprising that passion for constructivism in Baku led to the formation of its local version – "Baku constructivism" (Mamedov 2010: 28). Many prominent architects of the period left their mark on the capital of Soviet Azerbaijan in the 1920s. Apparently, the most famous building was the Inturist Hotel designed by famous architect Alexei Shchusev. The post-war generation knew this hotel under the name of "Old Inturist", as a new hotel with the same name was constructed. The restaurant operated in the hotel was a favorite meeting place for representatives of the Baku elite in the 1950s and as late as the 1970s. Constructivist buildings (the Printing Palace, State Bank and others) have brought additional color to the architecturally eclectic old (pre-revolutionary) center. And the Old Inturist Hotel, which was destroyed in the post-Soviet period, is still an important site of memory and socialization for many Bakuvians (Bretanitsky 1970: 121-132; Bretanitsky & Salamzadeh 1973).

The first attempts in new urban development planning were made almost immediately after the revolution, and The Garden City Projects enjoyed certain popularity until the mid-1920s. "The architectural workshop for regulating Petrograd's plan and its suburbs almost concurrently [since the spring of 1918] put forward the program 'Greater Petrograd' to turn Petrograd and small towns in the province to the garden city" (Meyerovitch 2007: 134). In the 1920s, development of the Master Plans for Baku and Odessa (Timofeyenko 1983; Bretanitsky, Ibid.) started.

Until the early 1930s, projects on developing *Sotsgorod,* whose population should not exceed 50-100 thousand people, were popular among many Soviet architects and economists. These settlements should have formed around industrial enterprises. The nourishing system, organization of the working process and leisure, and parenting were supposed to be arranged in accordance with the communal principle.[70] The culmination of the Sotsgorod concept as a continuation of the house-commune ideas were books by

[70] "These were houses that the Soviet government promised to build for its people. New cities with residential buildings, which would be completely different from those in the capitalist countries, where friendly groups of factory, plant and Soviet institution employees would jointly reside. With common canteens. Where workers and servants would quickly eat tasty food without wasting time on cooking. With bright and spacious school, hospital and kindergarten buildings. With new factories and plants immersed in greenery, because the rapidly developing science designing the world′s most advanced technologies would enable getting rid of smoke, soot, fumes and harmful gases. Without slums, without the contrast between the "center" (where bourgeois and other wealthy people lived amidst the best shops, restaurants and cinemas) and the "periphery" (where the poor huddled together under the tsarist regime in poorly-equipped makeshift houses, amongst filth). With wide streets, where citizens hold festive processions after gathering in large squares or in the People's Houses to discuss and to find joint solutions to important urban challenges" (Meyerovitch, et. Al., 2011: 9).
Many new cities were founded in the years of the Soviet Union. They were built around large factories and plants, but they were very far from the ideal image of Sotsgorod. The most known examples: Novokuznetsk, Magnitogorsk, Komsomolsk-on-Amur, Angarsk, etc. (Kopp 1970: 164-168; Meyerovitch, et. Al.,Ibid.; Kotkin 1995; Savenkova 2004).

Leonid Sabsovich and Nikolay Milutin published in the same year. The authors, among others, wrote that the *cities-giants* are absolutely unsuitable for the organization of people's social life (Sabsovich 1930: 7-11, 37-52; Milutin 1930: 10-21).

In those first years of Soviet power, specialists who talked about such cities meant primarily the capitalist cities of Western Europe and the United States. At that time, there were few giants of this kind in the country of victorious socialism, inherited by the Soviet regime from the Russian Empire. In fact, only Moscow and St Petersburg could be considered giants in the early 20th century. Although the population of Odessa and Baku also grew rapidly during the second half of the 19th century and the 20th century, these cities were noticeably inferior to Soviet capitals. In the years of the Soviet Union, Petersburg consistently ranked second by population, while Baku and Odessa were among the top two dozen Soviet cities.

In the most general terms, the population of the three cities can be shown as follows. According to the census of 1897, there were only two cities with a million people in the Russian Empire – Petersburg and Moscow (1267 thousand and 1035 thousand respectively) (Lappo 2012: 56-57). According to the same census, 403 thousand people lived in Odessa, which grew to 620 thousand by 1912 (Herlihy 1986: 251). Nearly at the same time, in 1910, 214 thousand people lived in Baku. (Bretanitsky 1970: 96-97). Nevertheless, "[Russian Empire] was far behind the West in terms of urbanization rates". In 1811, there were only two cities in the Empire whose populations exceeded 100 thousand – Petersburg and Moscow. "By 1863 Odessa joined them. [...] in 1885 – just 20 years later – Russia had already 13 cities with a population of hundred thousand, 19 by 1897 and 29 by 1914". Overall, only 23.3 per cent of the population lived in the empire's cities by 1913 (Vishnevsky 80-81, 84-85). In 1979, the USSR had 21 cities whose population exceeded one million (large Soviet cities). Leningrad was the second largest city after Moscow with a population of 4 676 million people. Odessa and Baku were included in the second ten (13th and 16th place) with populations of 1 072 million and 1 046 million people. (Morton 1984: 4). Taking into account the huge area of the empire and the Soviet Union, St Petersburg, Odessa and Baku were among the very few large urban centers of culture, industry and commerce[71] over a century and a half after the reforms of 1861.

[71]Most of the cities with a population of up to one million have started catching up and overtaking Odessa and Baku only in the 1930s or after the war. For example, the third most populous city in the USSR was the capital of Ukraine - Kiev. But as far back as 1930, Kiev (with a population of 574 thousand people) was inferior to Odessa. By 1979, among the five largest cities was also Tashkent (Uzbek SSR), which imperial administrators and Russian orientalists sought to turn to an "Asian St Petersburg". By 1914, it had a

Petersburg, Odessa and Baku could not be rebuilt as the "ideal" Sotsgorod. Such large cities were supposed to be reconstructed, to have new administrative centers and residential areas built within them. It was natural that “Red Moscow”, the capital of the USSR that was aimed at fully representing aspirations and achievements of the new regime, had undergone major reconstruction.

The experience of Moscow, in a sense, was of all-Union importance. Socialist reconstruction of many cities, which the Bolsheviks inherited from the Russian Empire, was strongly affected by the 1935 Moscow master plan (radial-ring structure of the city).[72] “The architecture of new buildings was to be neoclassical”, and it was particularly important to reconstruct the Red and Manezh Squares as well as Tverskaya street[73] – the place of the Soviet mass festivals (the anniversary of the October Revolution, May 1, etc.) (French, Ibid.: 64-65). In the first fifteen years of Soviet power, administration buildings, large cinemas, culture and leisure houses and parks, residential high-rise buildings and other structures in the capital were built in the spirit of constructivism, and then, since the mid-1930s – in the Stalinist neoclassical style. Moreover, huge residential neighbourhoods sprung up here in the 1960-1980s.

During the years of Soviet power, all these, according to Thomas Bohn, *typological features*[74] of the socialist city have also “decorated” St Petersburg, Odessa and Baku. All three cities had seen the rise of new government quarters and monumental structures (Stalinist neo-classicism and Empire style), spacious bedroom-community style suburbs and neighbourhoods designed to provide housing for the rapidly increasing population in these cities. All these Soviet architectural structures, design and patterns of new avenues and neighbourhoods contrasted markedly with the old centers of St Petersburg, Odessa and Baku that underwent less noticeable reconstruction than that of Moscow.

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population of 271 thousand people. By 1979, the fifth place went to Kharkov, the capital of the Ukrainian SSR from 1917 to 1934. By the early 20th century, the population of this city was 200 thousand people. (Morton 1984: 4; Leybfreyd, et. Al., 1985: 3-15; Hamm1993: 133; Kosmarskiy, 2008: 198; Sahadeo 2010: 2-3).

[72]Timothy Colton, telling the story of the development and adoption of the plan, noted that: ″The socialist blueprint promulgated four years after June 1931 was a virtual bible for Moscow and for soviet urbanization″ (1995: 272-280).

[73]Since 1932, a section of Tverskaya Street had borne the name of writer Maxim Gorky. In the 1960s, the Manezh Square was renamed the Square of 50 Years of the October Revolution (according to the history of the Moscow streets and squares, see: Sytin 1958).

[74](Bohn 2009: 7-10).

Petersburg, which had lost not only its status as capital but the name itself (since January 1924 it was renamed Leningrad)[75], remains the city of three revolutions in the Soviet years, the second one in the USSR. "Leningrad's metropolitan region is the second largest in the Soviet Union and the sixth largest in Europe [...] Moreover, Leningrad is the Soviet Union's second most important industrial center. [...] Has an extensive scientific establishment. [...] Leningrad has an additional resource that few other Soviet cities can draw on: a tremendous symbolic presence, rooted in its unique history" (Ruble 1990: 15-16). Despite slight decline, its status was still high and demanded large-scale architectural reconstruction. Therefore, as far back as 1936, "the same central institutions" that prepared the Moscow master plan "joined with the Leningrad city Soviet to enact an equally far-reaching general development plan for the old imperial northern capital" (Ibid: 42).

The symbolic center of the grand Stalinist urban development of the former imperial capital became Moskovsky Avenue. One cannot help but notice a certain irony in the name of this major highway, located in the southern part of the city and connecting Leningrad/St Petersburg with the airport. Discursive boundaries of the post-revolutionary Leningrad-Petersburg community were constructed through a confrontation with Moscow and Muscovites – symbolic images of "something different". "St Petersburg always felt a quiet hatred for Moscow" (Lurie 2014: 351). The invasion of a new architectural style, as an alien intervention of the new authorities directed from Moscow – the city-antipode and seeking to disrupt the integrity of the old ("genuine") city, is also reflected in the toponymy of Leningrad/St Petersburg.

Moskovsky Avenue originates from the historic center, at the Sennaya Square (1736) – the Peace Square during the Leningrad period. It became an extension of the "Tsarskoye Selo Perspective" that linked the "capital with Tsarskoye Selo, the suburban residence of the tsars" (Bartenev, et. Al., 1969: 188). Substantial pre-revolutionary buildings have been preserved here. And Stalinist monumental neoclassicism, in spite of being scattered along almost the entire length of this very long avenue (more than 9 kilometers), was mostly used beyond the city's historic center. According to Dmitry Khmelnitsky, "The historic center of Leningrad has remained relatively intact. Soviet ensembles were mostly built on the periphery. An attempt to create a new urban center on Moskovsky Avenue with the building of the House of Soviets as a core (Arch. N.

[75]In August 1914, the city name was Russified and Petersburg became Petrograd following the outbreak of the First World War and the rise of 'patriotism'.

Trotsky, 1940) ultimately failed. Stalin's Leningrad has not coincided geographically with imperial St Petersburg. The city [unlike Moscow] was saved due to the lack of the capital status" (Khmelnitsky 2007: 218).

The above-said House of Soviets in Leningrad is a "standardized type of a government building" of the epoch of Stalin's neoclassicism. This architectural style, which replaced constructivism, finally formed before the war, during the second half of the 1930s. Lush decor of facades and interiors of government buildings was combined with gradual standardization of the interior layout. 1939 was the last year when individual apartment layouts and sections of residential buildings were developed. Further construction was carried out only in accordance with a standardized design. According to Khmelnitsky, "The architectural appearance of the pre-war Stalin's city was formed from three main types of structures – palaces (ministries and party's residences), temples (public buildings - theaters, clubs, libraries) and palazzo (residential buildings)." Architectural experiments and innovative ideas were left in the past. Stalin's neoclassicism pretended to "a return to the eternal values of antiquity and the Renaissance. And they, in turn, lost quickly the monopoly on the theoretical truth and were replaced with unlimited eclecticism and stylization" (Ibid: 210-219).

Stalinist Leningrad is more pompous and monumental than imperial St Petersburg, with its socialist realism frozen in eclectic and triumphant architectural forms. Stalinist neoclassicism and the Empire style are also often considered a classic example of totalitarian architecture. "Generally speaking, any style can become public and totalitarian but dictators usually tend to classicism. It was originally based on the idea of the order, balanced harmony and hierarchy. It is easy to exaggerate these qualities and to make the original style carry an ideological burden alien to it" (Ibid: 362). Two epochs which are meant, though in different ways, to represent the power of the empire have met in the space of Russia's "northern capital", the classicism of old St Petersburg and Stalinist neo-classicism of Leningrad. The first remained an important part of the city's living texture, a testament of its uniqueness. A much more retiring fate awaited the second one in the memory of Leningrad/Petersburg inhabitants.

After the war, the city was rapidly expanding. This is when Moskovsky Avenue acquired its present appearance. Two ten-storey residential buildings built by 1955 finalized the composition of the square in front of the House of Soviets. The avenue runs as far as the Victory Square – the border of the Soviet Leningrad. After crossing it, visitors coming from Moscow and Kiev get to the city. The same avenue became the location for one of the few significant sites of memory of the Soviet period –Moscow Victory Park.

After Stalin's death at the end of the 1950s, neoclassicism was replaced with Khrushchev's pseudo-modernism, and "under Brezhnev neoclassicism started being used again" (Ibid: 363). It was important for Leningrad to reject the transfer of the city's administrative center to the area of the Moscow Avenue. It was decided to build the city in all directions from its nucleus, the historical center (Johansen & Lisowski 1979: 332-333). The most significant architectural ensemble built in the post-Stalin period of the 1950s and 1960s was Lenin's Square. These squares were built in all Soviet cities, often in honor of the 40th and the 50th anniversaries of the October Revolution. But it was Lenin's Square in the city of three revolutions that was one of the oldest and, in comparison with Odessa and Baku, the least enormous square. The square located in front of the Finlyandsky Railway Station got its name in 1924, immediately after the death of Lenin. A monument to the revolutionary leader was erected here in 1926 – "one of the first and outstanding works of monumental Leniniana." The monument was transferred in the postwar years, to the construction of a new building for the Finlyandsky Railway Station between mid-1950s and 60s, and, finally, the addition of a "wide (135 m) main descent to Neva at Arsenal Embankment" finalized the architectural and monumental ensemble in 1970 (Vityazeva & Kirikov 1986: 327-329). In contrast to Odessa and Baku, a monument to Lenin still stands in the square in St Petersburg.

From the late 1960s to the 1980s, "vast districts with new buildings and a population of hundreds of thousands of people were built in Leningrad" (Johansen & Lisowski, Ibid: 359-360). The main distinction of that period became uniformity of residential areas, with mostly standard nine-storey apartment buildings built in them. Rapidly expanding, the city on the Neva River had been concurrently losing its uniqueness at the same rate. These areas of massive residential development did not differ sensibly from those that appeared in many other large Soviet cities. As a result, the largest part of modern St Petersburg is a city that does not have unique features.

A comparison with the "hated" Moscow demonstrates the depth of homogenization of urban landscapes in the last decades of the USSR. The hit comedy 'The Irony of Fate, or Enjoy Your Bath!' (*Ironija sud'by, ili s ljogkim parom!)* directed by famous Soviet film director Eldar Ryazanov became a symbol of that epoch. The picture was premiered on January 1, 1976, and "About 100 million people watched the first New Year's screening of the movie."[76] Since that time, it became mandatory to

[76]This picture was made, based on the play written by Ryazanov in collaboration with Emil Braginsky at the end of the 1960s. M. Krigel & L. Danilenko (2012), Almost a Christmas Tale. Irony of Fate, or Enjoy Your Bath // Favorite Movies. Volume 12. Kharkov: "Yunisoft".

include it in the annual Soviet New Year's television program. After meeting with friends at a bathhouse to celebrate New Year's Eve following their own tradition, the central male character, doctor Zhenya Lukashin, gets very drunk and mistakenly flies from Moscow to Leningrad. Having somewhat sobered up, he catches a taxi to bring him home on the Builders' street, not realizing that he is in Leningrad. Nothing differs from his native Moscow. The street name, the house number, the design of the front door, the key to the apartment door, even the furniture and utensils in the Leningrad apartment, where he accidentally finds himself on New Year's Eve, are identical to those of his apartment in Moscow.

Although the main events of the tragicomedy take place in Leningrad, the scriptwriters and director ironically demonstrate a principle of featureless urban development that can be found in all Soviet cities. But grotesque humor of the film culminates in the main character's dislocation in Leningrad – a city that is known not only to every Soviet citizen, but everyone in the world for its unique history and architectural originality. As part of the late Soviet urban planning, a tendency to the total leveling of differences reached its peak. The only border still retaining its significance is an obvious difference between pre-revolutionary "genuine" St Petersburg and Soviet Leningrad. The "genuine" city is shown in the film only when the main female character Nadia wanders along the snow-covered streets of the city built by the Russian Emperors. The city that is identical to the Builders' street is an entirely different world (not a city). This is a bad parody of great St Petersburg, where, despite the best efforts of the Soviet government to homogenize cultural, social and physical landscape of *Northern Palmyra*, interesting, special people – inhabitants of Leningrad, many heroes of this movie – continue to be born and to live.

The programs of Sovietization of Odessa and Baku urban landscapes were similar but at the same time both differed from Leningrad and from each other in their scope. By the 1917 revolution, the historical center of Odessa was significantly larger than that of Baku. Although the city was badly damaged during the Civil War and the Second World War, the old center still retains its impressive size. The pre-revolutionary part still features the city's famous promenade – Deribasovskaya Street known to all residents of the Soviet republics just as Nevsky Avenue was known in Leningrad / St Petersburg. However, Odessa, in contrast to the *Northern Palmyra*, was not the second city of the Soviet Union and has not held capital city status, even though the city remained a major regional center.

These circumstances, in turn, contributed to the preservation of the old city as well as to the less intensive (compared with Leningrad and Baku) growth of its Soviet part.

Memories of Odessites and numerous descriptions of the city are narratives about the old, historic center. When the Soviet Union collapsed and there was no longer a need for acknowledgment of Soviet achievements in the development of the city, new standardized microdistricts have simply disappeared from narratives about the city. The architectural legacy of socialist realism appears in them only when necessary, for example, when the presence of Soviet (mostly public) buildings in the old center could not be ignored. Only in rare cases are the Soviet architectural structures given an important and positive role in the history of the city's architectural landscape formation, as it was with the building of a new railway station, which is one of the most important neoclassic Stalin-era structures in Odessa. The old pre-revolutionary station, built in 1880, was destroyed during the war in 1944. The new station, one of the symbols of post-war reconstruction of the city, was completed in 1952. Late Stalinist neoclassicism is embodied in many other public buildings (the Municipal Executive Committee, the State Bank, the Institute of Ophthalmology, etc.).

As in Leningrad, a new administrative center in Odessa was, in fact, placed outside the historic city. An important place of the concentrated Soviet heritage was the October Revolution Square (before and currently – *Kulikovo Pole*). As far back as the pre-war years, a new garden and a parterre were laid out here as well as a space adapted for meetings and festive demonstrations. In the year of the 15th anniversary of the October Revolution, an obelisk was erected in the square in memory of the revolutionaries killed in January 1918 and buried here in a mass grave. By 1958, the square accommodated a monumental building of the regional party committee – a symbol of the city's regional status. And in 1967, a monument to Lenin that was made with the participation of famous Soviet sculptor M. Manizer was inaugurated. Being a space for official commemoration of the events of the revolution, *Kulikovo pole* was not in the least bit an important site of memory for the Odessites until recently.[77] On the contrary, the Privoz market, the inhabitants' favorite place glorified by Odessa satirists, whose architectural design was also completed in the post-war Soviet years (Timofeyenko 1983), occupies a key place in discourses about the city and the special people living in it.

Development of the areas in the city center abandoned during the wars could not satisfy the needs of the rapidly growing population of the city. "Therefore, since 1958

[77]In May 2014, following clashes between supporters of the "Euro-Maidan" and the "anti-Maidan", 48 people were killed. The most dramatic events took place on *Kulikovo pole.*

construction had been conducted not on separate plots of land but in unoccupied territories and in an integrated way" (Ibid). By the time of the collapse of the Soviet Union, the city had grown at least fourfold in land area. Spacious standardized townships and bedroom suburbs were built. Most of the population of modern Odessa (as well as St Petersburg and Baku) lives in these parts of the city and all of them are located beyond historical Odessa. This is the same "non-city" that has no place in the narratives of the great and beautiful *Southern Palmyra*.

Unlike Petersburg and Odessa, Baku is a city of two historic centers. The oldest medieval part is Icheri Sheher (Içəri Şəhər, Inner City in Azerbaijani), Islamic or Eastern Baku surrounded by fortress walls where the Russian Empire's troops entered at the beginning of the 19th century.[78] In the 19th – early 20th centuries, this part of the city was infiltrated by European architectural styles. Medieval Baku was largely rebuilt before the Sovietization of Azerbaijan, but still remains a separate old city, whose boundaries are defined by the partially preserved inner fortress wall[79], Neftchiler Avenue and A. Aliyev Street. In the 1960s, when tourism started developing in the USSR, this part of the city became a must-visit place. In Icheri Sheher, there is the main (and, in fact, the only)

[78]History and specificity of formation of the oldest part of Baku – Icheri Sheher is not so important for this study. It is much more important to understand the process of constructing the socio-cultural landscape of Baku of the 20th century, when the community of Bakuvians was formed. Being a tourist attraction, Icheri Sheher was not a space for recreation and a part of the promenade, a favorite place for Bakuvians. This part of Baku was strongly associated with Islam and the bygone *eastern backwardness* largely eliminated during the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union, as stated in the official discourse. Thus, to understand the specificity of the separation of two centers is possible only in the context of the colonial Orientalist discourse that was being constructed in the 19th-20th centuries. It will be told at greater length in other chapters.

Furthermore, it should be noted that the issues preceded the short essay by Prassanna Raman ("Does the 'Islamic city' exist? If so, what exactly is Islamic about it?" (2012)), which offers an overview of the next book on this subject, are topical for describing medieval Baku. Of course, we can talk about a certain specificity of *the Islamic architecture* (mosques, exterior and interior design of residential houses, bazaars, the 15th-century Shirvanshahs' Palace and others) (Rabbat 2012). Or, following Janet Abu-Lughod, we can talk about the key socio-cultural *Islamic elements,* considering their local specificity ("Cities are processes, not products. The three Islamic elements that set in motion the processes that give rise to Islamic cities were: a distinction between the members of the Umma and outsiders, which led to juridical and spatial distinction by neighbourhoods; the segregation of the sexes which gave rise to a particular solution to the question of spatial organization; and a legal system which, rather than imposing general regulations over land uses of various types in various places, left to the litigation of neighbours the detailed adjudication of mutual rights over space and use. These three factors were Islamic, per se". (Abu-Lughod 1987: 172). Finally, remembering the rich tradition of critics of the Orientalist approach in case of the phenomenon of the Islamic city, we can try to understand how this part of irregular Baku is perceived in mentality of the native people (for more details see: Falahat 2014: 3-45). However, recognizing the importance of these approaches and asked questions, I will allow myself a certain reduction when referring to Icheri Sheher as an Islamic city. I am just pointing out the fact that almost the entire population of the city was Muslim before the arrival of the Russian troops.

[79]Medieval Baku was surrounded by two fortress walls – outer and inner. In the second half of the 19th century, the entire outer wall and a part of the inner one were destroyed due to the reconstruction of the city (Giyasi 2008: 45).

architectural symbol of the city having international significance (i.e. recognizable abroad) – the Maiden Tower. According to Leonid Bretanitsky:

> "The impressive appearance of the Maiden Tower that has no close analogues in the fortification architecture of both the Near East and Western Europe, the place it occupies in the coastal panorama of Baku, the romantic aura of legends and myths enveloping it and many related historical architectural issues that have not yet been fully clarified – all these factors determine attention it has long attracted. It is difficult to show a description of Baku, where the tower would not be mentioned. It is no less difficult to find any graphic or pictorial image depicting the seaside landscape of the city, whose composition does not contain this unique monument of the Azerbaijani Middle Ages" (Bretanitsky 1970: 22-26).

It is generally accepted that the history of this landmark begins in the middle of the 1st millennium AD, under the rule of the Iranian Sassanid dynasty. The Maiden Tower in its current form was completed in the 12th century. As an architectural symbol of the city, it stands apart from the main Baku promenade and is visited by most tourists. "In Soviet times, no considerable construction works were performed in Icheri Sheher due to the accelerated development of the city beyond the fortress walls" (Giyasi, 2008: 45). Some Soviet-era buildings intensified a variety of architectural styles, but their number was small.

In contrast, *second* oldest Baku, the suburbs or quarters of the 19th- early 20th centuries built during the rule of the Russian Empire, were transformed in the Soviet period. This part of the city is composed of very eclectic-style buildings, where architectural constructivism of the 1920s and Stalinist neoclassicism of the 1930-1950s adds diversity to buildings constructed in the 19th and 20th centuries. Perhaps, it is the eclecticism that makes old Baku original and has become its hallmark, indicating slightly blurred boundaries of the *second* old center, though significantly affected by Stalinist neoclassicism, still visibly different from the new Soviet city with its standardized monotonous buildings.

Stalinist neoclassicism in Baku, in comparison with Leningrad and Odessa, most clearly demonstrates an approach reflected in that era's formula "national in form, socialist in content". "The national republics were allowed and even required to use national motifs in architecture. In Baku, Tbilisi, Yerevan and Tashkent, the same [Stalinist] palaces and palazzi were decorated with elements of local traditional architecture – pointed arcades, turrets, bay windows, mural paintings and so on"

(Khmelnitsky 2007: 212-213). Such architectural combinations of Stalinist neoclassicism with *the country's historic architecture* can be seen everywhere in Baku (Alesgerov 1951: 102). The highest recognition as local masters of this style was granted to the Soviet Azerbaijani architects, the Stalin Prize winners Sadiq Dadashov and Mikail Useynov.

Poster of the Berlin Club "Bakinets". In the upper left-hand corner of the poster is a photo of the only symbol of the city, "Maiden Tower".
Berlin, November 2012. Photo by S. Huseynova

The 1920s saw construction of many townships designed to improve the living conditions for oil workers (White City, the Peter Montin township, the Kirov township in Binagadi, Zabrat et al.). All these townships were amalgamated within the boundaries of heavily mushroomed Baku by the end of the 20th century or became its distant suburbs. Soviet writer Vsevolod Ivanov, who visited the city in those years, wrote to Maxim Gorky: "Among other things, a city is being built there. A sort of oil Petersburg with a funny name – Stenka Razin township".[80] It is hard to say why Siberian Ivanov associated standardized residential buildings designed for workers with St Petersburg, where the writer had lived for about three years in the early 1920s.

However, the author and the planner of this largest settlement for oil workers, as well as the Baku Development Plan, was Aleksander Ivanitsky who established himself as a professional architect in the imperial capital. "The project by A.P. Ivanitsky was

[80]Quoted from: (Bretanitsky & Salamzade 1973: 43).

perhaps the first holistic master plan of a large Soviet city [i.e. Baku] after Moscow and Leningrad projects" (Bretanitsky & Salamzade 1973: 50-51).[81] One can see increasingly widespread ideas about the rules of creating "genuine" cities in these frequent concurrences and discursively intersecting images. The perfect pre-Soviet example could only be Petersburg, which was originally built as a regular European city. In the 1920s, Moscow was still waiting for a radical Stalinist reconstruction that turned it into the Red capital. Therefore, Petersburg/Leningrad could successfully compete with Moscow as an "ideal" city in the initial period of the creation of the USSR. It is not surprising that the strict layout of workers' settlements in Baku, which has very little in common with the northern capital, evoked such voluntary associations of writer Ivanov.

Baku, as the capital of the Soviet republic Azerbaijan SSR gradually formed as a large administrative, educational and industrial center. Before the war, early large-scale monumental Stalinist neoclassical public buildings emerged in the city. In 1934 the Nizami Movie Theater (still the largest in the country) went up, next to it the Ministry of Food Industry built in 1935. In 1936, construction of the Azerbaijan State Conservatoire was completed. In 1939 – a monumental building of the Stalin Museum and later the Republican House of Pioneers. Numerous residential buildings, schools, universities and stadiums were built in the Soviet national neoclassical style. As far back as the prewar years, a contest was held to design the local Government House[82], around which a new administrative center of the city was formed in the postwar period. It was the place where the main monument to Lenin was set up and an area designed for all Soviet mass public holidays (rallies, parades, etc.) was formed (Bretanitsky & Salamzade 1973: 96-105; 128-135).

Large-scale construction was suspended but not stopped completely during the war. One cannot help but see the difference between the situation in Baku from Leningrad and Odessa, affected by bombing and shelling. However, the fact of the ongoing construction is not as important as the completion of the main city promenade in the center of Baku in the early postwar years. Public space played a key role in shaping the community of Bakuvians. At that time this process was referred to as freeing the city center from "low-value" buildings. Having been erected along the line of the Baku

[81] In the Soviet Transcaucasia, there was another impressive example of large-scale urban planning in the 1920s. Yerevan, the capital of the Armenian SSR, was built in the 1920s under the project of another architect of the Sankt-Petersburg school, Alexander Tumanyan. But at that time, it was a relatively small city (Ter Minassian 2007).

[82] The contest was held for construction of the House of Soviets. As in Moscow, the project was implemented on a much smaller scale than originally intended, and by the end of construction it was the Government House.

promenade, the Buzovnaneft (1945) and the Azneftezavodlari (1947) apartment houses with facades in pretentious decorative style (and with typical elements of the late Stalin's Empire style) decorated with thick columns, towers and pointed arches altered its appearance (Ibid: 142-145; 158-160).

According to Useynov, who created these houses, he sought to embody in them "a cheerful image of a southern residential building constructed in the country, whose people are well-known for their ancient and strong architectural traditions."[83] In the postwar years, another part of the promenade that is popular among the Bakuvians, the Parapet square-park also known as Karl Marx park, was completely reconstructed. By the 1950s, the Baku promenade, an important socialization space for the Bakuvians, had formed its main architectural features. Pre-Soviet buildings not belonging to the low-value housing category as well as the 1920s constructivist public buildings were integrated into a massive array of monumental Stalinist neoclassicism. This is the *old* Baku, within which the contemporary community of the Bakuvians was being constructed.

Since the late 1950s, like many other Soviet cities, Baku had been growing even more rapidly. The city saw massive residential development and growth of its urban area due to the expansion of existing settlements and construction of new ones. Standardized residential quarters of the 1st through 9th microdistricts made it look like any other Soviet city during the epoch of mass construction of houses dubbed 'khrushchevka'. In the 1970-1980s, Baku was quickly growing due to construction of high-rise residential buildings. The bedroom suburb of Ahmedly (Khatai) became its greatest part. But in those last decades of the Soviet Union, the center was little changed. Though Baku expanded several times, we can observe again the growth of the same non-city. There is no place for monotonous and unremarkable bedroom suburbs (Ahmedly, Guneshli, etc.) in the discourse about the unique city of Baku.

[83] Quoted from: (Bretanitsky & Salamzade 1973: 145).

During the Soviet period, Leningrad, Odessa and Baku underwent large-scale reconstruction of their architectural and socio-cultural landscapes – a process which has affected to a varying degree all the cities of the socialist empire. These changes occurred in parallel with the process of rapid urbanization initiated by the Bolsheviks. "Russia's population – about 140 million on the eve of the First World War – was still four-fifths rural and predominantly peasant at the time of the Bolsheviks' October 1917 revolution" (Fitzpatrick 1994: 19). Slightly constricting an analytical framework, Anatoly Vishnevsky proposed: "that the Bolsheviks intended to turn the population which the new rulers inherited from the Russian Empire from a predominantly backward, rural and patriarchal into a modern and urban one" (Vishnevsky 1998:6).

For this purpose, new cities were built while old ones were developed. Such oases of urban life as St Petersburg, Odessa and Baku were to become only three cities among many others. According to Soviet geographers Lappo and Lyubovniy, a large socialist city should be considered as a "true center of urbanization, an arena displaying its basic processes and profound changes in people's lifestyle" (Lappo & Lyubovniy 1977, 3, 15-16). Of course, *the Soviet society* that was being created by the builders of the USSR had to be markedly different from that of the West in its class structure and relations. But it was destined to become an urban society nonetheless.

There were *two serious obstacles* to the implementation of these ambitious plans. *The first and most obvious is the extremely low level of urbanization of the vast territory of the USSR inherited from the Russian Empire*. The problem was not only in insufficient quantity of cities but also in their quality. There were quite a few cities – *genuine centers of urbanization* – in the Russian Empire. Although the policy of the Bolsheviks led to large-scale quantitative changes[84], qualitative progress in the development of urban life is called into question. According to architect and art historian Vyacheslav Glazychev, even in the era of stagnation, he had the audacity to claim that "there is no and has never

[84]In 1913, at the sunset of the Russian Empire, approximately 15 per cent of 155 million people lived in cities. By 1939, when the population of the Soviet Union reached 190.7 million people, the number of townspeople had already been about 32 per cent. In 1990, at the time of the collapse of the Soviet Union, 66 per cent of a total population of 288.6 million people were urban dwellers. In 1989, the percentage of the urban population in Russia, which hosts Petersburg, was higher than in the whole Soviet Union, at 74 per cent. As for Ukraine, where Odessa is located, the percentage of the urban population in this territory was 16.2 per cent in 1897 and 66.7 per cent in 1989. Compared to Russia and Ukraine, Azerbaijan with its capital in Baku still remains the least urbanized territory. In 1940, 63 per cent of Azerbaijan's population lived in rural areas. According to official figures as of 2009, the percentage of the urban population accounts for only 51.7 per cent (Vishnevsky, Ibid.: 84, 86-87, 88; Pivovarov 1996: 103; Rudenko & Savchuk 2013: 49; Ismayilov 2003: 10-15; Efendiyev 2010: 102).

been a city in Russia." In the mid-1990s, when the Soviet Union didn't exist anymore, he reiterated his thesis:

> "I would argue that despite an effective simulation of urban form, urban fundamentals proper were organically lacking in Russia before and are absolutely lacking today. [...] Cities in the European sense have been poorly rooted in the Russian territory at any time during its everlasting development, because we have persistent difficulties with the urban form of culture, and its very existence was and remains questionable" (Glazychev 1996). [85]

In the early post-revolutionary years, the Bolsheviks were optimistic. The party's ideologues were convinced of their ability to change the country, to turn the former backward Romanov's Empire into a modern and prosperous Union of Socialist Republics. But to solve this ambitious task, according to Yuri Slezkine, it was necessary to get rid of "one particular remnant of the past – the underdeveloped group of the Russian peasant". The Bolsheviks considered that "The 'peasant element' was aggressive, contagious and menacing. No one assumed that its brand of savagery would dialectically dissolve itself through further development, because the stubbornly "somnolent" Russian peasant was incapable of such development *as* a peasant (his was a difference "in content")" (Slezkine 1994) 424). Peasants (not only Russian ones whom the Bolsheviks believed to be the main problem) had to become urban dwellers and, for the most part, workers. As a result, "it was urbanization that had apparently become a central part of modernization of the Soviet society" (Vishnevsky, Ibid.: 78). However, the new regime implemented its policy in line with conservative modernization[86], and according to Vishnevsky, failed to create a "real" urban environment. For Vishnevsky and Glazychev, a "true city" is a city in Western Europe, and they don't find such cities in the tsarist and Soviet past.

> "The Soviet society, Vishnevsky said, always regarded cities with suspicion, tried to manage their development through Michurin's methods – supporting some attributes and eradicating others. Therefore, the Soviet urbanization, like many

[85] After the collapse of the USSR, Georgiy Lappo also lost much of his optimism. "By the end of the Soviet Union, urbanization had not been completed. At the moment, Russia faces a huge shortage of cities of all categories." (see: Lappo 2007: 7).

[86] "Modernization in Russia, according to Vishnevsky, could only rely on those social forces that were available at that time – forces that were still very archaic, "medieval". Therefore, such modernization could only be "conservative", based on the organizational forms fitted to the internal state of the early Soviet society" (See: Vishnevsky, Ibid .: 31-36).

other things, was ambiguous, meant both one step forward and one step back, movement towards the West and in the opposite direction" (Ibid.: 80).

The Bolsheviks representing their regime as the dictatorship of the proletariat attached key importance, in line with the official ideology, to the growth of the working class and improvement of living conditions for the country's "new owners". The working class, by definition, was concentrated in cities, i.e. large industrial centers. Before the revolution, among few such cities were Petersburg, Odessa and Baku. The first act of the new government – that later had a huge impact on the socio-cultural transformation of urban spaces and the content of discourses of the uniqueness of Petersburg, Odessa and Baku– was mass resettlement of workers from the suburbs to the prestigious (*bourgeois*) urban areas located mainly in the centers. "In 1918, the Soviet government decided to relocate workers and their families to the areas where the bourgeoisie used to live. During 1918-1921, three hundred thousand people moved from the working-class suburbs to the central districts of the city [Petrograd]" (Johansen & Lisovsky, ibid: 310). Even Soviet historians admitted that this mass resettlement had not solved the housing problem. Instead, it led to the emergence of a new phenomenon – communal living (*communal flats, Russian "kommunalka"*).

The same policy was implemented elsewhere. "When the Soviet power was established in the city [originally January – March 1918], a new housing policy was clearly formed. Workers, who previously huddled together on the outskirts and in the cellars, were moving to comfortable apartments of the bourgeoisie. This redistribution of dwellings continued after the final liberation of Odessa [in April 1919]" (Timofeyenko 1983). A little more than a year later in April 1920, the 11th Red Army entered Baku and class enemies on this southern border of the USSR, which was in formation at that moment, also had to meet new neighbours. The scale of Baku's housing policy is lesser-known than Leningrad and Odessa. But like any other big city of the former Tsarist Empire, Baku was no exception. According to the memoirs of famous Azerbaijani writer Chingiz Huseynov:

> "after the Sovietization, the process of forcing millionaires, including Isa Bey Ashurbekov (the head of the family of local nobles – oil magnates) [...], to share their living spaces with new tenants started across the country. Ashurbekovs' mansion built close to the city center was magnificent for those times [...] Well, to share? Let's share. And Ashurbekov's choice fell on his father's elder brother Ali Agha, whom he knew as a respectable merchant [...]. A year or two after the

> first forcible sharing of living spaces, the second wave began [...]. The former huge reception room [...] was divided into two parts, and one part went to a young German family of Jacob Kindsvater [...]. Another room with a balcony is occupied by a civil servant, he is Ashurbekov's countryman from Absheron, his wife is Adzharian, her name is Lamia Khanim [...]. A room at the end of a long corridor, which has a front exit to the street, was allocated to Russian party member Kutilov [...] who lives here with his young wife Rozaliya Isaakovna [...]. Opposite us, on the other side of the corridor or P-shaped gallery, the Isayev family lives [...]. Below, on the ground floor, more precisely, on the first floor, there are an Armenian and two Jewish families. [...] Basements are also being gradually occupied by families of uncle Vasya, a Russian carpenter, a Tatar street cleaner and a Persian citizen, who was deported to Persia after issuing [illegal] passports" (Huseynov 2004).

Right after the revolution and in the early 1920s, workmen and then Soviet civil servants were moved into apartments of those town dwellers whom the new government labeled as the class of oppressors. In practice, they were not only former royal officials or bourgeois, but also representatives of intellectual professions (writers and poets, doctors and engineers). Like many other initiatives of Soviet power, the effect of these mass relocations was unexpected.

As noted by Natalya Lebina, mass relocation of workmen and their forcible moving into comfortable apartments in the city center made life difficult for all of the participants in this process. Among those who suffered were not only the former owners, but also workmen, for whom living in apartments located far from their worksites and familiar living conditions became a real challenge. Many town dwellers (both natives and yesterday's peasants) were not only residents, but also "hostages of famous *kommunalka* – a certain type of apartment, which is possessed by several tenants. Kommunalka is above all a strange community," Lebina writes, "of people forced to live together on unclear grounds" (Lebina 1999: 182-183). Over the years, it has become one of the symbols of the Soviet system that sought to control not only public but also private spheres of people's everyday lives. Ultimately, it symbolized a regime that was unable to handle a variety of social problems effectively.[87]And it was Leningrad – the cultural

[87] See also: (Hubertus 1990; Pott 2009: 29-50).

capital of the Soviet empire – that became widely known as the city of communal apartments.

Yekaterina Gerasimova writes, "Leningrad was considered to be the most 'communal' city in the USSR and Russia". Information about the housing situation in the 1930-1960s is insufficient, and data is not useful for comparison. But even "Fragmentary statistics indirectly confirm that Leningrad earned a reputation as 'the city of communal apartments' in the postwar period. In 1951, on average, 3.3 families lived in one apartment in Leningrad. According to the census of social housing resources, as of January 1, 1960, on average, there were 2.75 tenants for one apartment" (Gerasimova 2000). According to Paola Messana, the general tendency across the USSR was as follows:

> "Up until the mid-1960s, 80 per cent of the population in the cities were affected, from Moscow to Baku, from Leningrad [...] to Kiev, from Odessa now in Ukraine to Sverdlovsk [...]. Aware of the problem, Nikita Khrushchev had immense blocks of city residences built as individual apartments and reduced the proportion of kommunalki to 50 per cent, then to 30 per cent. The USSR collapsed in December 1991, but the kommunalka still made up close to 20 per cent of the housing in Moscow, and much more in St Petersburg" (Messana 2011: 2).

Housing policy pursued by the Soviet authorities did not just promote a rapid erasing of class boundaries and a certain social leveling, when professors and engineers, civil servants and workers, doctors and street cleaners were forced to coexist in the same, often uncomfortable, conditions. In some cases, especially at the periphery of the empire, it also led to a noticeable decrease in the importance of ethnic and religious boundaries in everyday life. Christians, Muslims, Jews or atheists living together in cramped communal apartments for decades came in contact with traditions of their neighbours that were unfamiliar and even forbidden to them before. Various symbolic and practical rituals and rules of conduct, which had been previously important in reconstructing and maintaining ethno-religious boundaries in the city, were gradually losing their importance.

> "Once Rozaliya Isaakovna offered sausage to me… I remember how she invited me and offered a slice of bread and a piece of pink sausage with white pieces of fat. Pork sausage! Eating pork is a sin!... And I want to eat it but I am afraid at the same time: what if something terrible will happen, the floor will gape at my feet, a wall will crash down. [...] 'Just try it – she says – show me how brave you are!'

> I dared and started eating, it is very tasty, and nothing happens! As I was plunged into this greatest sin at that time, I still continue to abide in it" (Huseynov Ibid.).

Many Jews in pre-revolutionary Odessa and St Petersburg preferred to settle in the neighbourhood, thus forming places of compact residence in the cities. The tendency to form ethnic and religious neighbourhoods in pre-Soviet Baku was the most contrasting. At the end of the 19th and until the early 20th centuries, Baku was split into ethnic neighbourhoods: a Muslim (Azerbaijani) district, an Armenian one, and the administrative centre – a Russian neighbourhood (Altstadt-Mirhadi 1986: 283, 303). The somewhat smaller Jewish neighbourhood should be added to the list above. The boundaries of these neighbourhoods were not absolutely impenetrable, and it is possible to talk about mixed settlements in some parts of the city (especially in the administrative "Russian speaking" centre). Yet ethno-religious division of the city was significant for the absolute majority of its population. The Bolsheviks, guided by a policy of forced redistribution of property, initiated a process that led to the destruction of these urban neighbourhoods. In his memoirs, Chingiz Huseynov reflects on the specificity of communal living in post-revolutionary Baku:

> "It should be noted that almost every second mansion of this type in Baku [an oil baron mansion] – a lot of large, spacious houses were built here in the late 19th and early 20th centuries – became multinational after forcible sharing of its living spaces, and that was a reflection of the essential feature of the city which predetermined the fate of not only the city but also its residents for many decades until other times came at the end of the 20th century" (Huseynov Ibid).

I reiterate once again the theme of 'multinationality' as a loaded symbol to represent the relationships among city dwellers in St Petersburg, Odessa and Baku. Here, it is important to emphasize that the Soviet urban policy also led to a marked enhancement of the prestige of the city ('historical') centers for all segments of the population. According to Henry Morton, "For the soviet citizen […] the question of living within the center city or in surrounding settlements is not a casual but a crucial one. Beyond the city line, with the last high-rise structures still in sight, a harsher life style prevails, greatly lacking in creature comforts and time-saving devices" (Morton 1984: 5). The pre-revolutionary centers in St Petersburg, Odessa and Baku remained the only multi-functional urban clusters providing the residents of each city a full package of essential functions (shopping networks, all kinds of education and entertainment affordable to a

Soviet citizen, etc.). Although the value of the center has been gradually reduced in the post-Soviet period, I remark that many dwellers of Baku, Odessa and St Petersburg still prefer the old houses and neighbourhoods to the Soviet bedroom suburbs and modern new buildings. The fact that the city center is still the most comfortable area for living is just one of its attractions.

The monotonous Soviet-style development of the bedroom suburbs contrasted with the historical centers in St Petersburg, Odessa and Baku not simply in terms of greater comfort and aesthetic attraction. In the Soviet Union's postwar years, the population of Leningrad, Odessa and Baku continued to grow rapidly due to the ongoing migration from rural areas as well as smaller towns. Fast-growing bedroom neighbourhoods were largely intended for these migrants. And even their children born in these cities often remember them as monotonous areas with near-identical residential skyscrapers. The historical center, with its communal daily life and diverse architectural landscapes, remained "another city" for many of these migrants and their children, whose own dwellings had little in common with it. Like tourists from all over the Soviet Union, they went to the centers as if on study tours to new cities that they had only seen on postcards.

> *"I see how many people like Peter* [an informal name for St Petersburg]. *Both tourists and natives of Peter. It is so strange to me. I had never this kind of feeling. My Peter is not a city in magnificent pictures. I lived on the outskirts of the city. In a so-called bedroom neighbourhood. I went to the center once every three years. Yes, of course, I liked to walk along the embankment, to watch the city, this delighted me. But I knew that I would come back to my neighbourhood, get off the bus and step in the mud. And now, when I live in Berlin for 6 years, I began to feel an interest, perhaps, in Peter. I and Mark [husband] like to walk through Berlin, to discover new quarters. And sometimes I see some similarities to Peter"* (Taisiya, woman, 28 years old). [88]

Due to continuous growth and changes in the composition of the population of the cities over the past century and a half, outer suburbs have been unable to keep pace with the ever-changing urban habitus of the interior city. But in these old centers and especially after the war, there were more families of 'real' town-dwellers (often descended from several generations) socialized in the city and possessing urban habitus. Among the native

[88] S. Huseynova. Field Notes. Berlin, March 2015.

dwellers of St Petersburg, Odessa and Baku, those born and socialized in the historical centers, children and grandchildren of former peasants were more likely to become 'real' town-dwellers. And only native possessors of urban habitus, whose socialization was associated with living in the old centers, developed or recreated discourses and myths of the uniqueness of their cities in the 20th century, thus constructing urban communities and seeing themselves as members. As Mikhail Zhvanetsky, the most famous creator of Odessan discourse, wrote in the Soviet years:

> "Huge new districts have been built, but houses stand separately there, and it is not interesting to live there. It is interesting to live in the old courtyards with glass galleries, and everybody lives here as in an aquarium, and they are even illuminated with light bulbs, that is why I'm not married" (Zhvanetsky 2007: 9-10).

Odessan courtyard. Odessa, September 2012. Photo by S. Huseynova.

An Odessite, the hero of Zhvanetskiy's satirical story, admits he is single because there was very little privacy in the everyday life of old Odessa, and not only in communal apartments. Life for most Soviet people, especially in the 1920-1950s, was difficult and they often went hungry. City courtyards of pre-Revolutionary houses in southern[89] cities

[89]These cities were considered southern in the geography of the Russian and Soviet empires. In this geographical context, they are also perceived as southern by their residents. In both cases, geography

Odessa and Baku were the heart of everyday life, where collective mutual-aid practices developed. It was always possible to borrow some bread, salt or sugar from any neighbour. Young children playing in the courtyard were supervised by all the neighbours. In the difficult years, when the level of banditry increased, the intrusion of a stranger to such a courtyard could not go unnoticed. Gossips and scandals among neighbours were the only source of fun, if there was nothing interesting broadcast on the radio or television.[90] When recalling her childhood, Journalist Nadezhda Ismayilova *eulogizes* "the Baku courtyards":

> "We lived on Stalin's Avenue, 91 (present Neftchiler Avenue)[91] in a three-story house with balconies encircling the inner courtyard and tightly packed apartments. Once it was a caravanserai. Neighbours, as a family, lived openly and simply: shared delights, common quarrels, common hardships and a collective flu. A famous opera diva, known pediatrician, manicurist, dressmaker, a World Running Championship silver medalist, female school director, street cleaner, scene painter, head of a public utilities office and even an insane lady – all of them lived in harmony and tolerance in spite of having only one toilet and one tap on each floor. We even went to the bathhouse that was located next to the house together, in a side street next to a fortress…" (Bagirzade 2012: 29).

There were not courtyards of this kind in cold northern St Petersburg, only numerous communal apartments. Daily life in all three cities, especially prior to the mass construction of bedroom suburbs in the late 1950s – early 1960s, was characterized by a fairly high level of permanent neighbourly contact. According to Vishnevsky, life in "proper" Western cities is anonymous, unlike the life of everyday social control in rural

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contributes to certain exoticization (recreation areas, resorts and so on). I have already mentioned Odessa as "Southern Palmyra". In the case of Baku, epithet 'southern' obviously contains elements of Orientalist discourse. This Baku, which is largely oriental– a space conflicting the Western and Eastern ways of life– was represented in the movie with a self-explanatory title, *In This Southern City*, whose screenplay was written by Rustam Ibrahimbekov, a Bakuvian who was widely known in the territory of the former Soviet Union (Azerbaijanfilm, 1969).

[90]"Scenes in Odessan literature – poet and essayist Boris Khersonsky wrote – should unfold in a courtyard or inside a communal apartment. Thus, the novel by A. Lvov is called The Courtyard. The play written by three Odessa authors Valery Khait, Georgiy Golubenko and Leonid Sushchenko is called The Old Mansions. The action of stories by several Odessa writers takes place in a typical Odessan courtyard. As for myself, I have written plenty of poems, where an Odessan courtyard is the backdrop and the lyrical hero at the same time... Everything outside the courtyard can be considered to be outside of Odessa, at least – outside of the Odessan myth, that's for sure" (Khersonsky 2011).

[91]One of the most prestigious areas in the center of old Baku. The specificity of everyday life in those city courtyards in the old centers of Odessa and Baku was recalled in interviews with many of my informants. Many facts about this important part of Bakuvians' socialization are available in the collections of memoir essays collected by Bahram Bagirzade in Baku (2012; 2013).

areas. There was little *western* anonymity of this kind in Leningrad, Odessa and Baku, especially during the first decades of the USSR. It might be for a number of reasons. For example, the Stalinist system counted on mass accusations – "everybody was watching everybody" – which may have played a significant role. But it can be said for certain that the low level of anonymity was directly linked to overcrowding of the cities caused by the mass influx of rural populations.

In the 1940s and 1950s, the cities were "occupied by yesterday's peasants" (Vishnevsky Ibid.: 98), whose children and grandchildren (though not all of them) will become Petersburgers, Odessites and Bakuvians. David Hoffman describes the scale of Stalin's urbanization in his book, self-evidently titled *Peasant Metropolis*. "23 million soviet peasants […] moved permanently to cities during the 1930s – a rate of rural-to-urban migration that was unprecedented in world history" (Hoffmann 1994: 216). He questioned the idea that they all became proletarians and workmen, consciously creating a new life. Rather, they brought "pre-industrial culture and traditions […] village forms of organization and community" with them to the cities (Ibid: 217). Expectations of Soviet ideologists were also not realized as "new arrivals drew upon peasant culture and village network to formulate conceptions of social identity very different from the self-sacrificing proletariat envisioned by soviet officials" (Ibid: 217).

The relationships between the people and the authorities in the Soviet cities differed significantly from those in the West. After abolishing the New Economic Policy in 1928, there was almost no free enterprise[92] in the Soviet cities. The official employer of all Soviet citizens was the state, and there was no urban middle class, as in Western Europe or the United States. City dwellers, as communities, had almost no resources (financial or administrative) to influence the local authorities. They were unable to initiate or prevent any major changes in their cities, to efficiently and publicly oppose the reconstruction of old houses and districts, to fight for environmental compliance, or just to start a restaurant or café. They lacked agency to create uncontrolled public spaces. Instead, all their activities were aimed at building and maintaining neighbourhood and friendship networks. Inhabitants compensated for a lack of control over right public spaces by activating private relations, and an eventful everyday life centered in courtyards, communal apartments and kitchens, invisible to outsiders, which ramified their intimate networks.

[92]The countrywide shadow economy of the era of stagnation can hardly be considered free enterprise. Shadow economy entrepreneurs could not be sponsors, support any non-governmental civil organizations (if there were any), or finance any large-scale construction in cities.

But at the same time, many new residents of these cities did not feel emotionally attached to the new places of residence, and did not think about responsibility for their preservation and development. Such indifference to the city should not be surprising. In the mid-20th century, there were probably more first-generation peasants in Leningrad, Odessa and Baku than people who were born and socialized in these cities. Moshe Lewin aptly calls this period *the avalanche of urbanization*:

> "After the war – in stages, obviously – urbanization inevitably began to have a powerful impact on society, culture, mentality and even the state. An accelerated transition from a predominantly rural society to a mainly urban one involved, at halfway stage, the phase when the two types were basically intermingled. Frequently incompatible, they coexisted in an explosive mix and the historical distance between them remained very considerable" (Lewin 2005: 202).

Lewin also points to an essential element of Soviet urbanization: "The rural population, which supplied the bulk of the new urban population, 'ruralized' the towns before the latter succeeded urbanizing the rural folk" (Ibid.). The rural population underwent a gradual transformation into an urban one mostly in the post-Stalin period. The 1960s were a critical milestone, when the urban population started dominating, with Russia, Ukraine and the Baltic republics becoming the most urbanized parts of the Soviet Union. However, the quality of urban life remained low, and there was still little anonymity in comparison with the "western model"[93]. Ruralisation of urban areas, on the one hand, promoted a certain growth of solidarity between "genuine" Leningrad dwellers, Odessites, and Bakuvians. It encouraged the natives to construct and maintain the boundaries of their communities. On the other hand, overcrowding and the presence of a large number of yesterday's peasants in the cities prevented the rise of urban anonymity and facilitated a transfer of community relations typical of the village to the cities. Thus, urban communities of Bakuvians, Leningraders, and Odessites were forming in such a contradictory situation.

This was the effect of *the first obstacle* to the formation of urban communities of Bakuvians, Leningraders, and Odessites. The specificity of post-war Leningrad, Odessa

[93]Lewin does not write about the emergence of squatter settlements, but only mentions the processes of 'unplanned urbanization' (Ibid: 203). And yet, he rightly draws researchers′ attention to the fact that the course of urbanization processes destroys to some extent notions of the party′s strict control over the country. It is necessary to talk about 'spontaneity' of these processes. Lewin focuses primarily on economic factors and the formation of the labor market. In the context of the subject of this work, the growth in the number of unauthorized squatter settlements (nakhalovka) is of great interest. Unfortunately, these processes have been little explored (see, for example: Rumyantsev 2008).

and Baku consisted, inter alia, in the fact that these large urban centers had the potential to take in large numbers of peasants and turn them into city dwellers. The post-reform period and the years of the Soviet Union were marked by the arrival of numerous peasants to these cities[94]. Yet in the 1960-1980s, the urban environment becomes dominant, despite the fact that not all direct descendants of yesterday's migrants from rural areas or other towns become "genuine" Leningraders, Odessites and Bakuvians. Many of them preserved an emotional attachment to their former places of residence up to the end of life, and not all children and grandchildren of former peasants have contributed to the construction of myths and discourses of uniqueness of Petersburg, Odessa and Baku.

Communities of Leningraders, Odessites and Bakuvians were and remain much smaller in number than the population of these cities. Their major difference with Western urban communities[95] *was* and still *remains* the much lower anonymity of everyday life. The era of Soviet urbanization saw the formation of relatively small (compared to the population of the entire city) communities of city dwellers who identified themselves as *genuine* and/or *native* Leningraders, Odessites and Bakuvians. Before massive development started in the late 1950s, almost all of them lived in the 'historical' interiors. These old city centers had the highest concentration (almost all) of the scarce Soviet-era restaurants and cafes, the most famous cinemas and opera houses, museums and parks, philharmonic societies and theatres. Born in the old center, a resident of any of these cities attended a kindergarten located next to his or her dwelling place. He or she went to a nearby school (there were relatively few schools in the center, and all of them were the most prestigious). If he or she received a higher education, as a rule, it was located within the city center. Native residents relished walks through the old streets and boulevards and, of course, all of them gathered on the main promenades. Who among them would decide to go for walks in the Soviet suburbs? In fact, if their workplace was located close to home, it was possible to live for years without visiting new districts of the city.

> *"Before I became an adult, I had never been to the neighbourhoods and Ahmadli* [the bedroom community in the Soviet part of Baku]. *If you think about it, most of the city is still unfamiliar to me, although I am a native of Baku. Only after*

[94]Much has been said above about Soviet urbanization. With regard to the period following the reforms of Alexander II, according to the remaining data, the percentage of peasants who lived in in the city grew from 31.1 to 68.7 per cent from 1869 to 1910 (Economakis 1998: 7). For information about peasants' lives in the capital of the empire in this period, see the same work.

[95]As seen by modern Westerners-urbanists and social researchers, whose descriptions of urbanization processes in the current post-Soviet territory are influential (Vishnevsky, Glazichev etc.).

entering the university, I started using the subway regularly, and at first it seemed that the university was situated too far from the center, while it took only 15 minutes to walk from the University to the city. [...] *For us who have grown up on Torgovaya Street (ed.: the Merchant Street in Russian, present Nizami Street) it was usual to say "I am going for a walk to the city." And this was the city. Torgovaya, Parapet and Communist Streets, Baksovet (ed.: the subway station) and the Governor's Garden [the main promenade]. The whole way on foot. The school is a five-minute walk from the apartment. The walk to the workplace takes 15 minutes.* [...] *And all my friends and neighbours were in the same situation. I was 25-26 years old when my two friends and I went on a visit to Ahmadli. One of our friends had an apartment there. His parents were granted it but they never lived there. They never wanted to leave the center. While in fact they lived in the slums. The three of us got together on a bus, and when it drove down Bakikhanov Street, one of us asked near Samed Vurgun Street: is it Ahmadli?! He was a few years younger than us. He had never been in Ahmadli until that day, of course. But we had already experienced it! We had been to this friend's apartment a couple of times. However, it was but a step from the corner of Samed Vurgun and Bakihanov streets to Torgovaya. It is a ten-minute slow walk to get there! That's how we lived. Many who did not have to move from the center and worked close to home continue living this way"* (Murad, man, 43 years old).[96]

The old centers of Odessa, and, especially, of Leningrad are, of course, much larger than those in Baku. In these cities, it is even easier to live without crossing the boundaries of the historic centers. Lev Losev, the biographer of Joseph Brodsky, tells that most of the poet's life in Leningrad was spent inside an imaginary circle which 'cast a radius of half an hour's walk'. In these temporary borders for a walking man:

> "we will find some of Petersburg's best-known landmarks: the Summer Garden, Saint Michael's Castle, the Hermitage, Tauride Gardens, Smolny Convent, and nearly every place that figured significantly in Brodsky's early life. The circle includes the schools he attended, the homes of his friends, the Writers' House on Shpalernaya street, where he was first lauded and then conspired against; it reaches across Liteiny Bridge to the factory where he held his first job, and to the hospital where he held his second. There, too, just across the river, is Kresty

[96] S. Huseynova. Field Notes. Berlin, June 2016.

(Crosses), the prison where he was held in 1964. Closer to home, a mere two blocks away from the Muruzi, was the KGB lockup where he spent two days after his arrest in 1962" (Loseff 2011: 3-4).

The centers in these cities are not just old stairwells and facades. They are the heart of cultural life and unique architectural landscapes contrasting sharply with the monotonous Soviet buildings. Leisurely strolling through the main central streets was an obligatory ritual. There was only one street in each city that inevitably brought together everybody who came *to the city* to walk. It was Nevsky Avenue in Leningrad, Deribasovskaya Street in Odessa and Torgovaya Street in Baku. The specificity of everyday life (communal apartments and courtyards), rare opportunities to change residences, which were always insufficient, and state monopolized ownership led to the fact that *everyone knew everyone* in relatively small centers. The Leningraders, Odessites and, in particular, Bakuvians were and remain very *compact* communities.

> *"If two Bakuvians who are unacquainted with each other will sit and talk together for a few hours while drinking and eating, they will find out that they have many friends in common. Someone formerly lived close to someone, studied in the same school or institute, worked in the same place, quarreled, married or divorced"* (Aleksandr, man, 41 years old).[97]

Of course, this statement contains a certain exaggeration. But it is important for understanding the specificity of the described urban communities, for instance, the relative paucity of the Bakuvians. In the case of each community, we are talking about a few hundreds of thousands of people, although the population of these cities is made up of millions. Any *genuine* resident of St Petersburg, Odessa or Baku is convinced that he or she will be able to easily distinguish "another community member" from "a stranger". This belief is based, among many other things, on the memory of socialization in the same area, in the same urban environment. Symbolic evidence of the "right" membership in the community may be, for example, mandatory *mutual friends*. An urban myth that everyone was acquainted with one another was often constructed around recognizable *cult figures* of the crowd. As a rule, *everyone knows* people associated to a varying degree with art (musicians and singers, artists and writers, poets, actors or members of their city's

[97]S. Huseynova. The Field Notes. Baku, July 2014.

comedy team from a Soviet-era national TV competition (KVN[98]). In a broad sense, the most recognizable people emerge from larger artistic and intellectual environments, creating myths and discourses about their cities and communities. Each resident of the city who attaches to the community may not be personally acquainted with a local celebrity, but certainly knows someone who is familiar with him or her.

The emergence of unique urban communities in St Petersburg, Odessa and Baku, and their influential urban myths and discourses have always been directly linked to the presence of a significant intellectual stratum in these cities. It was intellectuals and people of the arts (local historians and ethnographers, essayists and journalists, poets and writers, artists and architects) who constructed myths and discourses of uniqueness of their cities and communities, which were then disseminated by the residents of St Petersburg, Odessa and Baku throughout the Soviet Union.[99] Boundaries of the urban communities become believable not just from their inhabitants' faith in their own myths, but also outsiders' beliefs that these cities are unique, just as much as the people who inhabit them. Myths that Leningrad is the cultural capital of the USSR, Odessa is the capital of humor and Baku is the most international city were and still remain widespread in the former Soviet space. Thus, the boundaries of the communities are constructed and supported from both the inside and the outside.

Urbicide and 'International' Cities

Based on their urban habitus and social capital, the urban communities in question also demonstrate a high degree of stability. Petersburgers, Odessites and Bakuvians have remained numerous for more than a century, despite the fact that the history of the 20th century is a time of bereavements and large-scale political, social and cultural upheavals.[100] These losses and cataclysms should be considered as *the second obstacle*,

[98]The Club of Cheerful and Quick-Witted is a mass movement of Soviet students forming numerous amateur teams that compete with each other in a format of humorous quizzes and free improvisations

[99]All three cities were major industrial and financial centers. But at the same time, all of them were cultural, educational and scientific centers as well. Intellectuals were a minority by far compared to workers, former peasants and other strata of the urban population (see eg: Economakis 1998; Grünewald 2004). But the intellectual stratum, in each city, produced many of the most famous and influential writers, poets, composers and scholars of their time.

[100]When talking about the impact that the city had on the formation of the future writer, Dovlatov′s biographers stress that postwar "Leningrad is a city where there were still pre-revolutionary libraries and real characters of Silver Age literature. There were speakers of pre-revolutionary Russian language, owners of good manners, people who had seen Europe. It is impossible to imagine Dovlatov′s linguistic purism and good breeding without the influence of this circle" (Kovalova & Lurie 2009: 63). Such pre-revolutionary circles also persisted in Odessa and Baku despite being considerably thinned out.

which renowned researcher and expert on the history of St Petersburg and Moscow, Karl Schlögel, very aptly named *"urbizid"* of Eastern European cities. Schlögel speaks about the transformation of many cities in the region into a theater of operations and losses: mass casualties among citizens and destruction witnessed by the survivors, depopulation of many large cities, and tragic gaps in the cultural and generational continuity. Of course, the classic example of *urbizid* is the siege of Leningrad during the Second World War (Schlögel 2005: 171-182). But this most obvious example does not belittle the significance of the fact that *urbizid* of many other Eastern European cities was recurring on a large scale in the last century. The most tragic period in the history of St Petersburg and Odessa and, though to a lesser extent, for Baku, was the first half of the 20th century with its two world wars, two revolutions and the Civil war, ethnic pogroms, mass refugee flows and Stalin's terror. Another well-known historian, Timothy Snyder, offered his metaphor to describe the events that took place in Eastern Europe in the first half of the 20th century.

> "The region most touched by both the Nazi and Stalinist regimes was the bloodlands: in today's terms, St Petersburg and the western rim of the Russian Federation, most of Poland, the Baltic States, Belarus, and Ukraine. This is where the power and the malice of the Nazi and Soviet regimes overlapped and interacted. […] Like the Jewish victims, the non-Jewish victims either were native to the bloodlands or were brought there to die. In their prisoner-of-war camps and in Leningrad and other cities, the Germans starved more than four million people to death. Most but not all of the victims of these deliberate starvation policies were natives of the bloodlands; perhaps a million were Soviet citizens from beyond the region" (Snyder 2011: 384).

St Petersburg/Leningrad and Odessa were located in the territory of *bloodlands*, and residents of those cities underwent *urbizid* twice during the Civil and the First World War. Transcaucasia is not mentioned either by Schlögel or Snyder. This region escaped the most terrible Second World War. Yet, major battles of the Civil War took place outside it. However, Baku also saw cruel and bloody clashes in 1905-1907, 1918 and 1920. Repressions against the urban population began with Soviet rule. Like any other place in the USSR, Baku did not escape Stalin's purges. Although the magnitudes of these

tragedies cannot be compared to those that took place in Odessa and especially in St Petersburg/Leningrad, Bakuvians also experienced their *darkest* days in the 20th century.

All three cities were hit hard during the Civil War. The famous science fiction writer Herbert Wells, who visited St Petersburg in 1920, described the once brilliant imperial capital that was in a state of collapse and extinction at the time of his visit (Wells 1921: 15-40). Our contemporary Lev Lurie tried to reproduce the situation in the city at that time as follows: "Petrograd is a desolate megalopolis in 1917-1921. [...] The corpses of horses lay on the pavement, there is no one to take them away. Imagine that 2.5 million people lived here in 1917, and only 500 thousand of them have remained by 1921. The rest of them have died or left" (Lurie 2014: 108). In his effort to accurately describe the tragedy of the city during the Second World War, he compares it to the most famous humanitarian catastrophe in the history of mankind. "Due to its consequences, the blockade is comparable to the Holocaust. [...] No European city underwent such tragic devastation during the Second World War" (Ibid.: 227 Lurie). Thus, St Petersburg/Leningrad endured terrible tragedies and near total depopulation in an interval of only 20 years.

During the Civil War, Odessa became one of the last strongholds of the Bolsheviks' opponents, the White Guard. It was a place of departure into exile for tens of thousands of people, among whom were many representatives of the cultural elite of the Russian Empire, the former high-ranking dignitaries and officers of the Imperial Army.

> "'Ah, Odessa, you saw a lot of sorrow!'- the famous song says... In the 1914–1920s, Odessa was really put to the test by history and 'saw much sorrow.' Odessa survived... Yet more than a third of its residents were killed in these years, died of epidemics and famine, dispersed around the world. Fate made Odessites move to Warsaw and Bucharest, Sofia and Prague, Paris and Berlin, New York and Haifa..." (Fitelberg- Blanc & Savchenko, 2008: 329)

But the losses in the Civil War pale before the events that Odessites went through during World War II. A great number of Odessa Jews, who failed or did not want to flee the city, did not survive the war. The city defended itself for two and a half months, and it sustained massive destruction during this time. Departing from Odessa, the Red Army sappers mined many of the buildings that later blew up with invaders. The list of destructions was continued with the events of 1944, during the liberation of the city, as more buildings were destroyed and the victors acquired a ruined, once beautiful city.

> "The devastation left in the city by the Nazis was enormous. They destroyed the biggest enterprises, wharves and warehouses at the port, the railway station, the post office and many other public buildings and dwelling houses. Many other architectural monuments were also ruined. It seemed that decades would be required to heal wounds and to revive the past" (Timofeyenko 1983).

In the early 20th century, Baku could also hardly be called a peaceful city. At that time, tensions between Muslim Turks and Armenians were rising. Until the winter of 1905, when the history of the Armenian community in the city had already spanned fifty years, there were no serious Armenian-Azerbaijani conflicts. However, according to Baberowski, a massive migration of Russians, Armenians, Jews, Georgians and others to Baku led to the situation where local Muslim Turks – the indigenous people – suddenly found themselves in the minority. "The natives of Baku were not ready for the occurred social and cultural changes. [...] During the competition, they have lost contact with the economically prosperous, urbanized, newly arrived Armenian population." Thus, the city was gradually turning into a "laboratory of aggressive xenophobia" (Baberowski 2004: 323-324). As a result,

> "In February 1905, violence erupted in the city of Baku on a scale unimaginable, even for citizens used to lawlessness and murder. With increasing intensity during a period of four days, the perpetrators set fires, looted, and killed. The clashes continued in various parts of the South Caucasus through 1905 and 1906. […] 'Witnesses' gave conflicting accounts about who attacked whom first in particular clashes, which was reported in the media or conveyed in rumors, and led to increased anxiety and mistrust between Armenians and Azeris. Between 3,100 and 10,000 people are believed to have died during this period" (Sargent 2010: 144).

The clashes, which began in Baku and later spread throughout the territory of present-day Azerbaijan and Armenia, assumed such a large reach and character that historians sometimes label this period as the first Armenian-Azerbaijani war[101]. In these and subsequent years, "Baku was a violent city. Simple brigandage was common. Serious conflict erupted in two forms – class conflict, as embodied in the labor movement, and ethno-religious conflict. The former made Baku a major center of the Empire's

[101]For more information on these events, see also: (Swietochowski 1985: 37-83; Swietochowski 1995: 37-42; Altstadt 1992: 27-49, 89-107).

revolutionary movement. The latter made it one of the bloodiest" (Altstadt-Mirhadi 1986: 303-304).

In 1918, Baku saw another two more violent and bloody conflicts. In late March, the struggle for power over the city unleashed between the Bolsheviks, entered into an alliance with radical Armenian nationalists from the Dashnaktsutyun party, and local Turkic nationalists, mostly adherents of the Musavat party. After the Turkic nationalists lost this fight, a brutal massacre took place in the Muslim quarter. However, by September of the same year, the city came under the control of the Ottoman regular troops, who were in alliance with the local Turkic Muslims. The seizure of Baku was followed by no less brutal pogroms of its Armenian population. According to some rough estimates, these conflicts have claimed the lives of tens of thousands of citizens[102]. In April 1920, Baku, being the capital of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic (ADR), surrendered to the Bolsheviks without resistance. Repressions against class enemies and local nationalists which followed the surrender claimed the lives of thousands of people once more (Baberowski 2004: 215-222).

Imperial Heritage:
"Multinational" population of the cities

Conflicts and depopulation of the cities that took place during political upheavals and humanitarian disasters were the result of not only the external invasions and terror, but also the specific ethno-confessional and social class composition of the population. Being the centers of power in Imperial Russia, these cities attracted senior members of the nobility. Many millionaires – industrialists and merchants – made their fortunes and built luxurious mansions in St Petersburg, Odessa and Baku. Many of them did not survive the Civil War and the repressions. In turn, the years of the Soviet Union brought with them a *multinational* or *international* character of the population of St Petersburg, Odessa and Baku, which contributed to the formation of these unique socio-cultural landscapes and original urban communities. In the context of the imperial past, however this has also led to conflicts that continue to have tragic consequences to this day. Social cataclysms and wars contributed to a mass exodus of populations. And yet, the greatest importance in urban discourses is attached to the ethno-sectarian diversity of the residents.

[102]For more information, see: (Swietochowski 1985: 135-139; Altstadt 1992: 45-49; Suny 1993, The Revenge of the Past: 38-43, 72-76; Baberowski 2003: 133-150).

According to statistical data, which are often fragmentary and inaccurate, ethnic Russians made up a majority of the population of St Petersburg over the three centuries of its existence. Natalya Yuhnyova, a known ethnographer and historian specializing in the theme of multinational Petersburg, begins one of her articles on the German presence in the city with a paradox:

> "There is no doubt that Petersburg was and remains, first and foremost, a Russian city both in the past and today. Russian because of national origin of the vast majority of the population, the dominance of the Russian language in it, the Russian way of life, Russian mentality and Russian culture, because of a contribution it has made to the treasury of the Russian people. At the same time, this is a cosmopolitan city: the proportion of non-Russians among the residents of St Petersburg ranged between 10 and 18 per cent throughout its three-hundred-year history" (Yukhneva 1998: 56).

In the 18th and 19th centuries a great number of residents of the Russian Empire would not agree with these views, of course. For Muscovite and famous Slavophil Konstantin Aksakov: "Petersburg [in the middle of the 19th century] is like a huge barracks drew itself up at attention. This granite, these bridges with chains, incessant drumbeat… faces are not Russian... There are marshes, Germans and Chukhnas around."[103] A hereditary Russian nobleman, one of the founding fathers of one of the most influential trends in the Russian nationalism of the 19th century, Aksakov had a deep aversion to the Northern capital like many of his colleagues. But, of course, not all intellectuals who lived or only visited this city shared his feelings. "It seems there is no city in the whole world that enjoys less sympathy than Petersburg," said St Petersburg artist Alexandre Benois in a famous article. "Which epithets has it not earned: 'rotten swamp', 'ridiculous fiction', 'impersonal', 'bureaucratic department', 'regimental office'" (Benoit 1902: 1). Benoit, who came from a Franco-German family and was a third-generation native of St Petersburg[104], opposed this attitude toward his beloved city,

[103]For more information on "hatred" for St Petersburg, as a non-Russian foreign city, widespread in the first half of the 18th century, see: (Ageyeva, 1999: 70-88). Chukhnas (Chukhonets) in Russia is a term applied to the population of the North-West region, where St Petersburg was situated, that spoke different Finnic dialects. Quoted from: (Dlugolensky 2005: 5).

[104]The artist's grandfather Leonty (Louis) Benoit, a Frenchman, escaped the French Revolution to St Petersburg in 1794 with his German wife. In the capital of the Russian Empire, where he lived and worked mainly, he founded a dynasty that gave us many Russian artists and architects, and eventually became a court confectioner. Ironically, his grandson, in turn, was forced to escape the Revolution, and ended his days in the land of his ancestor in Paris (see: Benoit 1955: 33-84).

but at the same time recognized the widespread adoption of this negativity. He also stressed that though the city "was growing under the guidance of foreign teachers, it did not betray its Russian origin." However, Benoit made a paradoxical addition to his statement: "A genuinely Russian person disliked everything in St Petersburg and continued to perceive it as a stranger..." (Benoit 1955: 33-34).

Being a center of power (the royal court was located there since 1712), the largest port and industrial center, *Northern Palmyra* did not just attract numerous provincials who dreamed of titles, orders and posts. Merchants, scientists, architects, artists, soldiers, seamen, engineers, artisans and adventurers flocked from all over Europe and beyond. Under the rule of the founding father Peter the Great, the city saw the emergence of various ethnic settlements: Tatar, Finnish, German, Greek, English, French, and so on. "In Moscow, it was difficult to find the name 'Russian Settlement' among hundreds of settlements and outskirts because the bulk of the citizens were Russians. While in St Petersburg, the situation was different. Behind the Admiralty building, downstream of the Neva River, there was one of the capital's Russian settlements, which bordered on the 'Foreign City'" (Semenova 1998:20).

But it was the new capital of the Empire where the tradition of segregating the *locals* from *newcomers* (aliens), as established in Moscow, was abandoned. In St Petersburg, Peter canceled administrative restrictions imposed by his father Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich (1645-1676) in pervoprestolnaya[105] which intended to prevent Orthodox citizens and Western Europeans (Lutherans, Catholics, etc.)[106] from settling together. Of course, for many *aliens* living in the city, it remained a place of a temporary but often a long-term stay. But some of them (Benoit's grandparents, for example) had stayed forever. After a certain period of time, the borders of ethno-religious settlements had been erased, and the Germans, Finns, Swedes, French, Italians, Russians, Jews, Tatars and Armenians became neighbours, friends and relatives. As a result, it was the constant presence of a large number of "foreigners" and their mixed-residence with Russians (Orthodox) that made St Petersburg noticeably different from other cities of the Empire for a long time to come.

[105]Moscow acquired the honorary title 'pervoprestolnaya' (i.e. the city where the first throne was located) when the status of the capital was granted to St Petersburg in 1712. The coronation ceremony was traditionally held in the old capital.

[106]The residents and the Orthodox clergy always expressed dissatisfaction with the presence of the few foreigners in Moscow. As a result, "a new German settlement was established in place of a burnt-out one on the Yauza River" in 1652, in the Time of Troubles (wars and a deep economic crisis that broke out during the period of 1598-1613) (Bakhrushin, et. al., 1952: 486-491).

Non-Russians had an enormous influence on the formation of the city's cultural landscape. Since its foundation and up to the First World War and Stalin's repressions, Germans played a prominent role in the urban community. In the 18th century, more than half of the scientists of the St Petersburg Academy of Sciences were Germans. And despite the following decline in the number of German scientists, they also played a key role in the development of science in Russia in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The Peter and Paul Fortress, one of the most recognizable symbols of the city, was rebuilt in stone under the direction of the military engineer and Governor General of St Petersburg, Count Burkhard Munnich, in the first half of the 18th century. Historian and geographer Gerhard Miller, the founder of the Norman theory, which had been hotly debated for three centuries[107], was the long-standing secretary of the Imperial Academy of Sciences and Arts. Carl Siemens played a key role in the development of the telegraph in the Empire in the second half of the 19th century. Beginning with Peter the Great, all Russian emperors married German princesses, and at the court, there were also many Germans who were always among the military and bureaucratic imperial elite.[108]

Additionally, the French and Italians have left an indelible mark on the history of the city. Architect Jean Leblond from France "became chief architect in 1716 and within six months of assuming the position, Leblond had prepared the much-needed general plan" (Bater 1976: 21-26). The Peterhof ensemble of palaces and parks, the Catherine Palace in Tsarskoye Selo, the Smolny Convent and many other buildings built in the Baroque style, without which it would be impossible to imagine any set of postcards with the main city landmarks, were designed by the chief architect of Empresses Anna Ioannovna and Elizaveta Petrovna, Italian Francesco Rastrelli. In 1862, Frenchman Francois Aziber opened the first Russian factory for the production of canned food. The first restaurants opened by the Swiss and the French in St Petersburg, as well as German bakeries and pastry shops, played an important role in the city's daily life in the first half of the 19th century.

Having descended from a family of French Huguenots, resident of St Petersburg Karl Bryullov became "the first Russian artist who gained European fame" (Chesnokova, 2003: 151-152). His brother, architect and artist Alexander Bryullov, led the reconstruction of the living quarters of the Winter Palace following the fire of 1837. Albert Cavos, a St Petersburg-born descendant of a Venetian family, built the Mariinsky

[107]For more information on the Norman theory and disputes about it, see: (Klein 2009).
[108]For details, see: (Slezkine 1994: 111-114; Smagina, eds., 1999)

Opera and Ballet Theatre in 1860. Later, Milanese Gaetano Ciniselli opened a large circus in St Petersburg in 1877.

Since the last third of the 19th and for almost the entire next century, both St Petersburg / Leningrad and Odessa were spaces of Jewish emancipation. The Jews came to the capital of the empire in the hope of getting a modern education, launching their own businesses, being at the center of cultural life or joining the revolutionary movement. "In Russia in the second half of the 19th century there appeared a significant group of Jews who, joining the Russian intellectual elite, began together with Russians to offer a liberal political alternative to the tsarist government. Such Jews lived primarily in St Petersburg and worked as lawyers, doctors, engineers, and journalists" (Horowitz 2009: 139). There were many Jews among brokers and pawn-brokers, brothel owners, etc. Despite the authorities' attempts to impede Jewish settlers, "Between 1869 and 1910, the officially registered Jewish population of the imperial capital of St Petersburg grew from 6,700 to 35,100. […] Between 1881 and 1913, the share of Jewish doctors and dentists in St Petersburg grew from 11 and 9 per cent to 17 and 52 per cent". (Slezkine 2004: 117, 122, 125).[109]

In the 20th century, Leningrad and post-Soviet Petersburg retained the status of a cultural capital thanks largely to Anna Akhmatova, a famous Russian poetess who lived in the city. Shortly after her birth, her family moved from the *Southern Palmyra* to the Northern one, and it became Akhmatova's beloved city. In the 1920-1930s, Osip Mandelstam, who was born in Warsaw to a Jewish family, added his name to the St Petersburg myth. After the war, this was the city where poet Joseph Brodsky, also a descendant of a Jewish family and future Nobel laureate, lived. Born in a mixed Jewish-Armenian family, writer Sergei Dovlatov wrote his stories in Leningrad in the same years.[110]

[109]For more information on *aliens* and Jews in Petersburg, see: (Cross 1997: 222-261; Semenova 1998: 29-93; Chesnokova 2003; Muravyova 2004: 192-211; Bredereck 2004: 37-62; Dlugolensky 2005: 79-87; Kleinmann 2006).

[110]Mandelstam spent only a part of his short life (1891-1938) in St Petersburg; however, he managed to tell about his childhood and youth in his memoirs (The Noise of Time) and to dedicate memorable lines from his poems that would gain acclaim only later to his beloved city ("I returned to my city familiar to tears..."). Dovlatov was born in September 1941 in Ufa, where his family was evacuated to for some time during the war and blockade. Among all of them, only Brodsky was born in Leningrad. But all these artists, considered themselves natives of Petersburg and Leningrad and had an enormous influence on the development of St Petersburg discourse and myth in the 20th century. For more information on their biographical connections with St Petersburg and works created while living in it, see: (Khrenkov 1989: 5-6, 24-74; Volkov, 1998: 19-42; 2002 Mandelstam: 17-84; Loseff 2011: 1-24; Kovalova & Lurie 2009: 60-116; Turoma 2010: 63-83; Lekmanov 2010; Nerler 2014: 245-254).

Many volumes would not be enough to tell about the contribution of non-Russian residents to the creation and development of the city and the St Petersburg myth. But, of course, the capital of the empire, with its brilliant front façade, was also an important center of the formation of Russian high culture (secular poetry and literature, opera, theater, ballet and painting) as well as official nationalism (both imperial and ethnic). Here, Poet Alexander Pushkin, writer Fyodor Dostoevsky and poetess Anna Akhmatova lived and created their works, which have become something of a cult. It was the city where the famous formula for official Russian and imperial nationalism – Sergei Uvarov's Triad "Orthodoxy, Autocracy, Nationality" was first read in the early 19th century (Miller, 2008: 139-159)[111]. In the autumn of 1900, the infamous right-wing monarchist 'Russian Assembly' – the future Black Hundred – was founded on the banks of the Neva River (Kiryanov 2003).

Yet, many visitors to the city throughout 18th-20th centuries often saw something "not quite Russian" in the lifestyle of the residents of St Petersburg and in the design of its urban neighbourhoods. This city was unlike any other city of the Empire. And even in the Soviet era, when it was firmly reputed as the city of three revolutions, there was widespread discourse about special refinement and demeanor of residents of Leningrad that were not inherent to the Soviet way of life. According to the famous city historian and native of St Petersburg Lev Lurie, a descendant of emancipated Jews who moved to the city from western Ukraine and Belarus, "In the absence of its own Petersburgian language and other signs of ethos, demeanor plays a crucial role in the urban subculture. Any 'self' is nourished and cherished" (Lurie 2014: 22). The city and the community of the residents of St Petersburg have always remained a separate island located on the edge of the boundless sea of "*the Russian way of life, Russian mentality and Russian culture*" (Ibid.).

The Northern capital was being born simultaneously with the Russian Empire, and the "Petrine reforms had dramatically changed the structure of Russian culture" (Lotman 1997: 57).[112] Arguments constructed in static historical vacuum claiming the

[111]In continuation of the discussion about "Russianness" of St Petersburg's life, we can remember that: "The person who was put in charge of inventing a new, official national ideology for the empire [...] did not even bother to write in Russian, let alone to eat cabbage and rye bread. Sergei Uvarov (1785-1855) education minister under Nicholas I, despised Russian culture and corresponded usually in German and French" (Franklin & Widdis, Eds., 2004: 60).

[112]I should admit that here I have deliberately taken Yuri Lotman's phrase out of the context of his statement that the "cultural core" remained unchanged and was expressed in the trust and recognition of the high authority of the word. According to him, after Peter "the God-inspired word" has been replaced with secular literature. High prestige and significance of "literature as verbal art" for Russian culture (which was not observed in Europe) are clear proof of the fact that the cultural core remained unchanged. Yet, Lotman

possibility to maintain a certain *Russian lifestyle and culture* immutable in the socio-cultural space of St Petersburg– such a dynamic of a city unlike any other of the Russian Empire and the USSR– are a vivid example of cultural essentialism prevailing in the former Soviet space and academia.[113]

However, works like these provide an opportunity to construct counter arguments, which enable us to see more clearly the specificity of the community of St Petersburg that statistics alone can tell little about. 10-18 per cent of *non-Russian residents*, being perhaps the vast minority of the population of St Petersburg, played a huge role in the intellectual elite of the city. In the years of the Russian Empire, they formed a very significant stratum in the upper class that cradled the military and administrators, scientists and writers. The class of commoners (raznochintsi) was also largely composed of these people: physicians, engineers, businessmen, merchants, manufacturers and others. According to Lurie, "The first generation of Petersburg's residents per se was composed of children of commoners, noble servicemen, foreigners and infidels – Benois, Dobuzhinsky, Blok, Akhmatova and Mandelstam. They invented it and created the ideologeme" (Ibid.: 20). These people always inhabited the historic city center. Some of their descendants who survived the war, famine, blockade and collapse of the Soviet Union continue to live in their old apartments, transformed into *kommunalkas* (communal apartments), to (re)produce the Petersburg's myth and urban community. Largely due to the efforts of these 10-18 per cent of the city dwellers, it became a "window to Europe", the most European of all the empire's cities.

Though many Odessites would certainly quarrel with this statement, it would be no exaggeration to say that Odessa became the second largest non-Russian city (due to its architecture and way of life) founded in the Russian Empire's occupied territory in the 18th century. According to one of the numerous local historians Gennady Stepanenko,

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trying to identify a certain cultural "core" and then defend its immutability does not deny the scale of the changes. After all, the phenomenon of suddenly emerged and blossomed secular Russian literature and poetry is a direct consequence of the reforms of Peter I.
After Peter, not only a new (especially, but not only) high Russian culture was created, but also a deep split between the new Europeanized elite and the peasantry that formed the vast majority of the population of the empire up to the mid-20th century. Alexander Etkind categorizes one of the consequences of this split as an internal colonialism and exoticization of the traditional and peasant lifestyle.
It can also be added that, in James Cracraft's fair opinion, "the cultural revolution launched by Peter I in Russia began with architecture". And it was St Petersburg that had become the symbolic space that witnessed "architectural revolution", which became a part "of a wider process, at once political and economic, as well as cultural" (Cracraft 2004: 301-303). Externally, St Petersburg is still very different from any other city in Russia and the world in the facades of its buildings and the view of its streets.

[113]It is obvious that well-known professional historian and ethnographer Natalya Yuhnyova, who lived all her life in Leningrad/St Petersburg, often acted as an intellectual involved in the production of official nationalizing and populist discourses. Of course, this is not about an isolated case, but rather about the tendency of discursive ethnic and cultural homogenization (Russification) of St Petersburg that was dominant (at least, widespread) in the Russian academic science.

"During the first few decades after its foundation, Odessa was considered in Russia as an overseas city" or even "foreign" (Stepanenko, 2004: 64). It was perceived in the empire as a foreign city not only because of its emergence on the newly colonized and annexed territories of Novorossiya. Beginning with Catherine II, almost all Russian emperors as well as local administrators sought to attract immigrants to the city. People were needed to colonize a new land. The imperial authorities supported the policy of resettlement of Russian serfs, Ukrainians, Cossacks, Old Believers, Dukhobors, etc. from other overpopulated provinces (Smolensk, Chernigov and others). As a result, among the first residents of Odessa were many Slavs (Russian and Ukrainian), however, there was always a lack of such residents (from these ethnic groups), and yesterday's peasants did not have experience conducting business and constructing modern cities. But, unlike Petersburg, the *Southern Palmyra* was built in the densely populated[114] region that was very heterogeneous in terms of ethnic and religious diversity.

> "Even more than his grandmother Catherine, Tsar Alexander [the First, 1801-1825] [...] eagerly recruited new colonists from a remarkable variety of people. The neighbouring Ottoman Empire contained numerous Christian peoples - Bulgarians, Gaguazy, Moldavians, Serbs, Greeks, Armenians and others - who had reason for disgruntlement with Turkish rule" (Herlihy 1986: 27).

In addition to other groups, this diversity included Muslims ("the most important group was the Nogai Tatars" (Ibid.: 29)), as well as migrants from different European countries: the French, Italians, Germans, Swedes and others. And, of course, the Jews "who lived in region of Odessa even before the founding of the city" (Ibid.: 26). And that's not counting the numerous and regular visitors – sailors on merchant ships from all over Europe, businessmen and others. In the first half-century after its founding, such a culturally and linguistically diverse population gave a special flavor to this port city located in the south of the Empire and distinguished by its "non-Russian" architecture. Like St Petersburg, Odessa was built in the European style, not reflecting Northwestern Europe however, but the image and likeness of the Mediterranean cities, and especially the Italian ones. As a result, booming Odessa, in turn, gave the impression of a *non-Russian city,* though in a very different spirit than the northern capital.

[114]If the Black Sea region is considered, in the broadest sense, as a part of south-eastern Europe.

As was the case with St Petersburg, foreigners – immigrants from various Western European countries – had a tremendous impact on the formation of the architectural and socio-cultural landscape of *Southern Palmyra* in the imperial period of its history. The founding fathers of Odessa were Spanish nobleman and serviceman Osip Deribas (Jose de Ribas), and a native of the Netherlands, military engineer Franz Devolan (de Vollan). The most recognizable and still popular mayor of the city, who started transforming Odessa into a "pearl of the sea", was the Duke of Richelieu, who left France because of the revolution. In Odessa, he did not feel himself to be a lonely Frenchman, abandoned to his fate in the middle of nowhere. As Governor General of Novorossiya, Richelieu "took care of entertainments for the city's new inhabitants. Frenchman Thomon designed the theater built in 1808, a certain Renault established a so-called redoubt, where almost thousands of people could gather and dance, and there was also a restaurant and hotel in it" (Maykov 1897: 11). Under his patronage another Frenchman, Count Louis de Langeron, became the mayor of Odessa and governor-general of Novorossiysk province in 1816. The first book published in Odessa in 1814 was written by a French abbot Charles Nicolle (*An Outline of Upbringing Rules in both Odessa Noble Institutes*) who founded a guest-house in *Northern Palmyra* that was the most prestigious for its time and then, in 1817, the Richelieu Lyceum in *Southern Palmyra*. The Imperial Novorossiysk University, which was later renamed Odessa National University, was opened on the basis of this institution in 1865 (Anufriyev, et. Al., 1991: 5-48)

Until the end of the 19th century, the Italians and the Greeks greatly impacted the city's development. In the first decades after the founding, there were so many Italians in Odessa that their language sounded everywhere. Perhaps, with some exaggeration but not entirely without reason, Anna Makolkin labels the city "the last Italian Black sea colony" (2007: 5). The architectural symbol of the city – the Odessa Opera and Ballet Theater – was built under the guidance of the Italian architect Alexandre Bernardazzi. Many other structures were erected with the participation of another Italian architect, Francesco Boffo, who tied his life to Odessa and ended his days here in 1867. He also participated in construction of the Potemkin Stairs, another symbol of the city that is a must-see for all tourists. In the first half of the 19th century, many rich Greek merchants were engaged in export and import of various goods in Odessa. During almost two decades of the late 19th century, the city was governed by Gregory Marazli, who was an Odessa-born Greek

and another local historians' favorite character from Odessa's brilliant past. As for the *Southern Palmyra*, the list of *foreigners* could also be extended.[115]

Despite the abundance of foreigners and their contribution to the city, its Jewish population increased rapidly since the foundation of the *Southern Palmyra* and century has been playing a key role in the history of Odessa since the mid-19th century until the first half of the 20th. According to Yuri Slezkine, "Until the 1880s, actual Jews were a marginal presence in the Russian state, thought, and street" (Ibid.: 114). In the case of Odessa, Jews could no longer remain inconspicuous in the streets. By 1844, the number of Jews "was close to 13,000 people and made approximately 15-16 per cent of the city's total population. At that time, it was the highest urban concentration of Jews" (Stepanenko 2004: 102). By 1912, there were already upwards of 200 thousand Jews in Odessa and they made up more than 30 per cent of the total population (Herlihy 1986: 251). A lot of the Jews moving to the city broke off with the traditional way of their small-town life in the Pale of Settlement. "Odessa's Jewish community did not fit the standard model. Indeed, Jews came to Odessa precisely because they wanted to flee from the 'distinctive way of life' that trapped them elsewhere in the Pale" (Sylvester 2005: 13). In the second half of the 19th century, *Southern Palmyra* became an important center of cultural and religious emancipation, as well as the business activity of the Jews in the Russian Empire.

> "In 1887 in Odessa, Jews owned 35 per cent of factories, which accounted for 57 per cent of all factory output; in 1900, half of the city's guild merchants were Jews; and in 1910, 90 per cent of all grain exports were handled by Jewish firms (compared to 70 per cent in 1880s). Most Odessa banks were run by Jews, as was much of Russia's timber export industry. […] In 1886, more than 40 per cent of the law and medical students at the [university of] Odessa were Jews" (Slezkine, Ibid.: 122, 125).[116]

Odessa, however, became famous not only as a cultural and business center. Banditry and thievery became an important sign of everyday life in this port city in the 19th – early 20th centuries. According to Charles King, "the city's thievish reputation" was built by *criminals' talents* who came not from the poorest environment but from the

[115]For more information on Aliens in Odessa, see: (Herlihy 1986: 21-48, 125-126, 258-262; Penter 2000: 33-66; Stepanenko 2004: 29-44, 64-70, 94-97; Gubar 2007: 45 59, 286-301; Makolkin 2007, Tretiak 2011: 107-217; Tretiak 2012: 28-32, 44-73, 144-158).

[116]See also: (Zipperstein 1986; Polishchuks 2002; Klier 2013).

petty bourgeoisie (meshchan) (King 2011: 136). Among thieves and bandits, who glorified Odessa in their own way, were all sorts of people. In the 1920s, Aleksander Kazachinsky, who was of noble descent and started as a militsiya (police) officer, continued his adventurous life as the leader of a known smash-and-grab gang, in which the local Germans played a prominent role. Kozachinsky ended his life as a writer and author of the novel *Green Wagon*, where he tells of his adventures with "an Odessa sense of humor". In 1983, the novel was made into a tragicomedy of the same name, which tells about the confrontation between bandits and amateur militsiya officers in post-revolutionary Odessa. This film, popular in the 1980-1990s, contributed to the propagation of the myth of Odessa as the capital of humor as well as the exotic southern edge of the Soviet empire.

And yet, it was the Odessa Jews who played a special role in this area. According to Jarrod Tanny, "Jew and criminal, in fact, became synonymous for Odessa's mythmakers, and in representations of the city, the one almost always implies the other" (Tanny 2011: 8). Statistics, Ilya Gerasimov stresses, does not confirm the myth of the Odessa Jews' prominence in the criminal spheres. "However, the official statistics also confirm in no ways the fame of the crime capital [known as] 'Odessa-mother'" (Gerasimov, 2003: 212-213). Perhaps, it was the fault of its most successful criminals that the city acquired great fame, owing also, of course, to Odessa journalists and writers. As for the possible underlying motives of the Odessa Jews' criminal activity, one can agree with Gerasimov who says that: "The Odessa Jews felt themselves and behaved differently than the Jews in other parts of Russia (and the world). They were finding their own way of integration into the 'large' society that was not always legal" (Ibid.: 259). As a focal point of illegal activities, including the Jewish criminal life, a poor area at the very edge of the city named Moldavanka gained particular fame in the 19th century. Here on Zaporojskaya Street the future "King of Odessa bandits" – Mishka Yaponchik (Moshe-Yaakov Vinnitsky) – was born in 1891 into a middle-class Jewish family (Savchenko, 2000: 129-159). Moldavanka and its resident Yaponchik (the inspiration for Benya Krik) first appeared in high literature thanks to Isaac Babel and his famous "Odessa Stories".

The theme of Odessa as the city of bandits and thieves was repeatedly depicted on the screen in the post-Soviet years as well. In 2009, Ukrainian director Vladimir Shegeda made a 20-episode documentary with the self-explanatory title *Legends of Gangster Odessa*. The first episode tells about the legendary thief and trickster of the second half of the 19th century, *Son'ka the Golden Hand* (Sheyndlia Solomoniak), who came from the environment of uniquely emancipated Odessa Jews – "fences, tricksters,

moneylenders, smugglers, counterfeiters" (Stepanenko, Ibid.: 120). In 2007, the theme of post-war 1946 gangster Odessa was depicted in the popular live-action serial *The Liquidation.* Odessa is shown in this film as a predominantly Jewish city where Lieutenant Colonel of militsiya David Gotsman, a Jew by birth, confronts numerous and organized criminal groups undercover as a well-disguised collaborator.

Portrait of Isaak Babel in the Worldwide Club of Odessites.
Odessa, October 2016. Photo by S. Huseynova.

Odessa became notorious for numerous anti-Jewish pogroms. In 1821, the overpopulated port city where the competition between the Greeks and the Jews was particularly acute saw the first anti-Jewish pogroms in the Russian Empire. Subsequently, multiple large-scale waves of pogroms rolled across Odessa in the second half of the 19th – early 20th centuries.[117] And yet, despite the banditry, pogroms, the revolution and the Civil War, the Jewish population continued to grow, at least in terms of percentage by the early 1920s. "In the 1920s, 37-44 per cent of Odessa residents were Jews (the Jewish population increased due to refugee flows)" (Savchenko 2012: 230).

By then, *Southern Palmyra* was already well known not only as the capital of crime, but also as an important cultural center. In the first place, Odessa was made famous

[117]Slezkine describes the pogrom of 1871 which took place in Odessa as the first incident of this kind, after which the Jews of the Russian Empire were constantly harassed and persecuted. See also: (Zipperstein 1986: 114-128). In his turn, Stepanenko expresses doubt that the events of 1821, 1849 and 1859 can be considered as 'real pogroms' and points to the year 1871. However, regardless when it happened, in 1821 or 1871, Odessa was home to the first. For more information on pogroms in Odessa, see also: (King, Ibid.: 127-149; Stepanenko, Ibid.: 135-139; Humphrey 2012).

at the end of 19th and in the first half of the 20th centuries by musicians, many of whom were Jews. Being a city filled with the memory of imperial development and successful colonization of the southern borders, Odessa, however, had never been an important center of formation for Russian or Ukrainian nationalism. It was the city where Vladimir Jabotinsky, one of the central figures in the history of Zionism, was born and created his first works. In contrast to the significant influence he has on the ideology of modern Jewish nationalism (or perhaps precisely because of that fact), Jabotinsky has left no visible trace in the history of Russian-language literature.

But in the early 20th century, Odessa gave the empire, along with musicians, a number of masters of the word, among whom there were also many Jews. The most famous of them was the author Isaac Babel, who did not survive Stalin's repressions. He has been assigned a key role in modern narratives about Odessites who have made a significant contribution to the development of Russian-language literature. He is also an important center of Jewish emancipation, around which many intellectuals construct ongoing discourse about the significance of the Jewish community for the development of the city after the collapse of the Soviet Union. At the time Jabotinsky and Babel created their works, the influence of life in the big imperial city Odessa on the Jews'– in terms of their emancipation or assimilation (depending how you interpret these processes) – was a theme actualized in daily life.

In the postwar Soviet years, themes of Jewish life marked by anti-Semitism that was not always visible but pervaded at the state level were not popular for obvious reasons. The process of the breakup of the USSR coincided with a mass "return" of Odessa (and not only) Jews "to their roots". As a result, discourse about the special role of the Odessa Jewish community in the history of the Eastern European Jews became prevailing. One example of the aforesaid was a series of conferences with the common self-explanatory name "Odessa and Jewish civilization" that was held in Odessa in 2002 and over the next few years. The first of them coincided with the opening of the Museum of History of Odessa Jews. The third one was dedicated to "the life and work of outstanding author Isaac Babel" whose creative work, according to one of the conference organizers, director of the museum Mikhail Rashkovetsky, should be considered in the context of "significant, but still insufficiently studied and realized stage in the history of the Russian, Ukrainian and world Jewry." Although this statement seems somewhat questionable, Rashkovetsky very accurately noted that:

> "Isaac Babel is an Odessa writer. His creative work is a kind of outcome and summit of the multicultural situation that was forming in Odessa since its foundation. One can say that Odessa 'made' Babel. On the other hand, it was Babel who became a forerunner and prophet of prosperity of the so-called 'south-western literary school', which glorified and heavily mythologized the city. Given the creative nature of a myth, one can say that it was Babel who "made" Odessa" (Rashkovetsky & Naydis, Eds., 2005: 4-5).

This "school" was also called South Russian, conceptualized by the St Petersburg-born literary critic and author Viktor Shklovsky in the 1930s (Yarmolinets 2011). It is not important whether such a school had in fact existed, but Shklovsky in his article, published in the influential *Literary Gazette*, lists all the writers who glorified Odessa as a city of literary talents (Yarmolinets 2011). Among them are the authors of one of the most popular and daring satirical novels of the Soviet era – *The Twelve Chairs*. This novel was written by the joint efforts of two famous Odessa natives – Russian Eugene Katayev and Jew Ilya Fainzilberg.[118] Had it not been written, the discursive image of Odessa, as the city and, especially, the capital of humor, would never have become so influential in the postwar years.

However, the famous Odessa *KVN* teams, made up of many professional comedians and satirical writers who were born in the city, also made their contribution to the creation of urban discourse and myth. Among them is Mikhail Zhvanetskiy, one of the most popular satirists in the post-Soviet space, who performed his works onstage for many years, and was the first and only president of *the Worldwide Club of Odessites.*[119]

And it was the Baku *KVN* team captained by one of its founders, Bakuvian Jew Yuli Gusman, that managed to defeat the famous Odessa team and win the Champions Cup in 1970. Gusman, a well-known director and anchorman, has been living in Moscow for many years, and often revisits Baku. In his interviews, he often talks about *the special city* and no less special people, the Bakuvians[120]. It follows from his words and many other similar statements by townspeople (public persons and ordinary people) that a

[118] As the authors of this novel, they are better known under their pen names: Ilya Ilf and Yevgeny Petrov.
[119] A little known fact is that one of the most popular Soviet children′s poets Korney Chukovsky also started his road to fame in this city. Here one can again see interesting coincidences, unique biographies and similar fates. Unlike Anna Akhmatova, Korney Chukovsky was born in St Petersburg but his family moved to Odessa when he was an infant. He started his career as a journalist for the Odessa News newspaper, and he gained his first literary experience under the patronage of Jabotinsky, whom he knew since his childhood.
[120] See, for example: Mikhail and Yuli Gusmans on the city and the fate, Baku magazine, № 12, 2009, 31-37.

history of the last hundred and fifty years – of the local specifics of the formation of the socio-cultural landscape of modern Baku, as well as that of the community of Bakuvians – although significantly different from those in Odessa and St Petersburg, is also unimaginable without *Europeanization* and the significant contribution made by *foreigners* to this process.

In fact, it was such *foreigners*, and not Muslim Turks, who were seen as bringing *the light of modernization* to the small *eastern* city since the second half of the 19th century. In the last third of the 19th century, on the southern and eastern peripheries in Muslim Baku, emissaries from Moscow and St Petersburg, in turn, played the colonizing role of *European missionaries* bringing gifts of civilization to the "backward" peripheral regions of the vast empire. The ethnic and religious diversity within the population of the empire was fully reflected in the composition of its emissaries. Among them were different subjects of the tsar of All Russia: Russians and Ukrainians, Poles and Germans, Jews, as well as Armenians and Georgians who had received a *European* education, understood as advanced at that time. The imperial center dispatched all administrators and a significant part of the bureaucracy to the region. A high-level regional post of the tsar's governor, as well as the positions of the governors and vice-governors, who controlled the regions and provinces within the Caucasian viceroyalty, were occupied by Russians, Germans or Georgians, but not by the Muslim Turks. This statement can also be attributed to the urban officials, including all Baku city mayors and their assistants, chiefs of city police, and so on.[121]

[121]In the middle of the 19th century, Transcaucasia became part of the Caucasian viceroyalty with the center in Tiflis (modern Tbilisi). From 1844 to 1853, the post of the Caucasian governor was occupied by one of the then most well-known and successful royal administrators – Prince Mikhail Vorontsov. Before moving to Tbilisi, resident of St Petersburg Vorontsov had long held a position of Governor-General of New Russia, and had an enormous impact on development of then-under-construction Odessa (King Ibid.: 73-78). In 1846, the only Muslim Turk in the governor′s administrative apparatus was Mirza Fatali Akhundov, who worked as a translator. At that time, Baku was located in the territory of the Caspian oblast governed by Baron Alexander Wrangel. The mayor of Baku was Prince Pavel Argutinsky-Dolgorukov, and among key officials in charge of urban affairs were only two judges who were local Muslims (see: Caucasian Calendar for year 1846: 161-163, 174, 178). Two decades later saw the last years of a very long-term service (from 1862 to 1881) of Grand Duke Mikhail Nikolayevich, a high-ranking official in same governor′s administration office where Akhundov worked (by then he was already a well-known poet, whose life was coming to an end). At that time, Baku was the center of a separate governorate ruled by Major-General Valery Pozen. It can be very difficult to find a dozen of Muslim Turks that would have occupied secondary and even lower positions among representatives of the city′s administrative apparatus as it increased in number (see: Caucasian calendar for 1877: 7-11, 37-40). In the twilight of the empire, during the governorship of another Grand Duke Nikolay Nikolayevich, among officials and officers in its administration were the names of only two or three Muslims, who held positions that were far from the highest importance. The Baku Governorate was ruled by Kamer-Junker Lev Potulov, Georgy Kovalev was the Mayor of Baku, the city architect – Yuli Genzel, the chief physician – Klimenty Topuridze, the city police chief – Alexander Ahmametyev etc. There were somewhat more Muslim Turks amidst the urban bureaucrats, but they held, as a rule, secondary positions and often served as translators (Caucasian Calendar 1917: 33-46, 163, 176-182).

In the second half of the 19th century, when Baku experienced an oil boom, there was no need to invite architects, engineers and men of art from Western Europe to reconstruct and modernize the city, because specialists came from the Russian Empire itself. On the one hand, the scale of construction and the efforts made to create *modern* landscapes not only in Baku, but also in all the Transcaucasian cities, were less grand than those observed in Odessa and, especially, St Petersburg's construction. On the other hand, the longest continental empire learned to nurture local experts in the city centers located on its territory. Therefore, almost all professional engineers and architects who built the historic center of Baku in the late 19th and early 20th centuries were graduates of higher educational institutions of the imperial capital St Petersburg.

Unlike St Petersburg and Odessa, Baku was not known as a center of arts and cultural development in the early 20th century. Of course, people of different professions and vocations stopped in the capital of oil industry but significant artistic, sculptural, literary or theatrical works and, especially, schools did not spring up. Local poets and writers became known only among the educated and not a very large Bakuvian public.

The main heritage of that time which has partly survived and affected the process of creating the Bakuvian urban community is the unique architectural appearance of the parts of historical Baku (the city center) that were built by professional *Western* specialists. In the 19th – early 20th centuries, one can find the names of Muslim Turks among the city's architects and urban engineers. For example, Gasim bey Hajibababayov or Ziverbay Ahmedbeyov, who became the first Muslim to serve as Baku's chief architect after the collapse of the Russian Empire. But in the imperial period the most significant contribution to the grand architectural appearance of the city was made by architects of Polish descent Joseph Goslavsky and Joseph Ploshko. Both of them graduated from institutes in St Petersburg. Besides these two builders, renowned in Baku, many other *foreigners*[122] hugely contributed to the formation of the historical city center.

Ethnic and religious diversity of the city's population in the second half of 19th and early 20th centuries can be seen in every street constructed in the center of Baku in

[122]When listing some of them, Architect Rena Efendizade noted: "During that period, architects, who were mostly graduates of the St Petersburg Institute of Civil Engineers invited to Baku to work, worked hard and efficiently. Among them were J. Goslavsky, J. Ploshko, G. Ter-Mikelov. N. von der Nonne, Y. Skibinsky, K. Skurevich, J. Edel, A. Eichler, N. Bayev, V. Sarkisov and others. Buildings they constructed have been included in the golden fund of Baku′s architecture; they are an essential part of the central area of the modern city and largely determine the specificity of its appearance" (1986: 50). Thus, they had created the part of the urban landscape where the community of Bakuvians formed hereafter. Renowned expert Shamil Fatullayev, who has set himself the task of compiling a list of all professional architects who worked in the territory of the future state of Azerbaijan in the 19th – early 20th centuries, speaks of 41 names and only four of them belonged to local Muslims (Fatullayev 1978: 196-214).

that period. Thus, this period saw the formation of the grand Nikolayevskaya Street[123] which represented the most vivid form of architectural eclecticism, and which has become a hallmark of Baku. Initially, the territory of the future Nikolayevskaya Street was lined with rows of stalls designed by the German engineer Ferdinand Lehmkuhl. In 1898, Goslavsky launched construction of a private Muslim women's vocational school in this street, which was sponsored by Haji Zeynalabdin Tagiyev, one of the richest local oil barons and philanthropists among the Muslims of the city. "An exceptional place among the institution's decorative elements was occupied by the superbly executed oriental-style main façade" of the building (Fatullayev 1978: 84). In 1900, the abovementioned Goslavsky headed construction of a luxury monumental building of the City Duma (legislative assembly) in the pseudo Baroque style.

The Realschule (the future first building of Baku State University), which was designed by the Russian engineer, a graduate of St Petersburg Civil Engineering School, Dmitry Buynov, was constructed between the girls' school and the Italian Renaissance style Duma. Musa Nagiyev, another Muslim millionaire and oil baron, ordered Ploshko to erect a palace in memory of his son, who died at a young age. The Ismailiya building, built in the Venitian Gothic style by 1913, has housed the Presidium of the Azerbaijan Academy of Sciences since the Soviet era. The opposite side of the street was beautified by a classic style tenement building designed by engineer Vartan Sarkisov (ethnic Armenian). And also by the adjacent Sadikhov Brothers residence, which was designed in the oriental style by another Armenian engineer, Gabriel Ter-Mikelov. Opposite this building the same Ter-Mikelov designed the building of the Summer Center for Public Gatherings (Summer Club) in the Italian Renaissance style, which was later transformed into the State Philharmonic Hall. Right across the street from the Center, on Sadovaya street (its then name) there is the Debouer's mansion, owned by Leo de Bouer, a merchant of Dutch origin. It was designed by German engineer Nicholas von der Nonne, who used elements of classical architecture in the decoration of the facade. The mansion housed offices of an organization called the "Caspian Partnership", before it was transformed into the Fine Arts Museum (Fatullayev-Figarov 1998: 125-145).

Brutal and bloody years of the collapse of the empire and attempts to found a national state of Muslim Turks – the Republic of Azerbaijan, and the Sovietization that followed them promoted rapid change in the class composition of the population of Baku,

[123]Obviously, it was named after Emperor Nicholas II. Later its name was changed several times. In the late Soviet period, it was renamed as the Communist Street, and after gaining independence – Istiglaliyyət (in Azerbaijani: independence).

but did not lead to its nationalization. In the 1920s, Poles, Germans, and Georgians[124] as well as Armenians, Jews and even a considerable number of Muslim Turks were actively abandoning Baku. These were townspeople who made up a large part of the bourgeoisie, middle and upper-class urban bureaucrats, people of knowledge-based professions (architects, engineers, journalists, etc.). The city was rapidly losing representatives of those strata of the population who had extreme difficulty getting adjusted to the new regime. Many of those who failed to leave Baku in time or did not want to leave did not survive the mass Bolshevik repressions (Baberowski Ibid.: 215-222). However, the new regime was in the same need of oil as the old one. After stabilization of the situation in the 1920-1930 years, the city's population continued to grow rapidly, and it was not only Muslim Turks[125] who came here and replaced those who left. Baku was still inhabited by numerous Armenian, Russian and Jewish communities, which were replenished through new waves of migration.

The Soviet policy of indigenization of elites encountered great difficulties in the country. Educated or even literate people among the Muslim Turks remained disappointingly low for a long period ahead. According to Jörg Baberowski, a sustained commitment to the indigenization policy ultimately led to the transformation of the Azerbaijan SSR into a Turkic republic (Ibid.: 316-348). However, imperial multiethnic Baku had not been transformed into a national capital city for a long time, before the collapse of the Soviet Union. To replenish the bureaucracy with Turkic Muslims primed by the soviet administration was easier than to nurture local skilled workers, engineers, scientists, architects, sculptors or musicians who would have been capable of competing on equal terms with *foreigners*.

In the 1920s-1930s, Vladimir Lenin's plan for Monumental Propaganda was executed in the Azerbaijan SSR by experts from the *European* Soviet republics moved to Baku. Among them were many immigrants from Ukraine, which by that time had become Soviet. For example, Yelizaveta Tripolskaya –who was born in Poltava Governorate and received education in St Petersburg and Paris was one such immigrant, and so were the

[124]History of the German communities, which resided in the territory of Azerbaijan, including Baku, survived the First World War, Revolution and Sovietization, but ended during the Great Terror and deportations of Germans following the outbreak of the Second World War (Zeynalova 2002; Verdiyeva 2009). Less numerous Poles, who came to Baku to work and often did not linger for a long time, fled the city mainly after the Sovietization (See: The website of the Polonia − Baku Community, http://www.polonia-baku.org/ru/dzialacze.phtml).

[125]"In 1910, the population of Baku was [...] 214 679 people" (Bretanitsky Ibid.: 96-97). According to Baberowski, "Bolsheviks who returned to Baku in April 1920 found it being depopulated ...." However, the population of the city not only quickly recovered in numbers under the Soviet power but also grew rapidly and already "in 1929, Baku numbered half a million people" (Baberowski Ibid.: 370, 374).

Odessites and ethnic Jews Pinhos Sabsay and Jacob Keylihis– graduated from the St Petersburg Academy of Arts, as well as many others (Novruzov 1960: 7-34).[126] The historical and ethnographic Society for the Exploration and Study of Azerbaijan was founded in 1923 on the initiative of the linguist Arthur Zefeldt-Simumyaga (Shnirelman 2003: 123-125). Following Sovietization, another graduate of St Petersburg institutes Professor Evgeny Pakhomov established a professional school of archeology and numismatics at Baku University (Gafarov 2010). The most famous director of the Philosophy Institute established within the Academy of Sciences in the 1940s was a native of Belarus, a graduate of Kazan University, and an ethnic Pole– Alexander Makovelsky. A would-be list of artists and scientists, in addition to the engineers, architects and other specialists in various fields, who lived in Baku in the 20th century and participated in the creation of the Soviet Azerbaijani national tradition, would include thousands of names. This stratum of the city's population significantly strengthened in the 20th century when, during the Second World War, Baku was flooded by refugees from the European part of the USSR, including those from Leningrad and Odessa. In general, foreigners who came to the capital of the Azerbaijan SSR as temporary workers or as refugees, and often stayed in the city for years, played a prominent role in all spheres of the arts, sciences and urban industries until the post-war 1950-1960s.

When it comes to foreigners in Baku in the last third of the 19th – 20th centuries, it should be remembered that subjects of the emperor were replaced with Soviet citizens. Legally, most non-Turks who inhabited the city were not *foreigners*. The vast majority of these people came to Baku from other republics and autonomous regions of the Soviet empire. However, a radical change in the urban discourse occurred under the Bolsheviks who claimed a desire to create a single Soviet nation. Baku was no longer one of the imperial cities and the eastern tsar's property, which was controlled by foreigners – Europeans.

The 1920s saw the dynamic construction of the discursive image of the city[127] as the capital of the national Azerbaijan Republic – *the outpost of socialism in the East*.

[126]In the 1920-1960s, there were dozens of painters and graphic artists (K. Bykov, B. Beno-Telingater, L. Knit, M. Vlasov, M. Gerasimov, P. Chichkanov, Y. Samorodov, L. Pridatok, G . Piralov, E. Proschyan, etc.) working in Baku, who moved to the city from St Petersburg, Moscow, Odessa, Riga and other cities of the Russian Empire and the USSR. Many of them were educated in Paris, Rome, Munich and other European cities (Miklashevskaya 1974).

[127]Not only a new national discourse, but also a Baku-based institutional structure was being created. In the 1920-1930s, along with bureaucratic institutions (various republican ministries and government agencies), Baku saw the construction of centers for promotion of high national culture: the Azerbaijan State Philharmonic Hall, the Azerbaijan Opera and Ballet Theatre, the Azerbaijan State Drama Theatre, etc. (see, e.g., Jafarov 1951).

Among other things, this fact meant that the discursive rights of possession of the city carried over from Russians and other *foreigners – Europeans* to local Muslim Turks (Azerbaijanis). From now on, it was their city in the context of the official Soviet national discourse.

As a result, nationalized Baku, unlike Odessa and Leningrad, has never turned into an all-Union cultural center. The city gradually became a center for the development of the Soviet national Azerbaijani culture and art. Similar to any other Soviet national culture, achievements of the Azerbaijani public figures were popularized around all of the Union. But, with some exceptions, pieces of national literature, opera, theater, painting, sculpture and later cinema remained little known to the general Soviet public and were interesting mainly to Azerbaijanis. Soviet national Azerbaijani socialist realism remained unfamiliar, exotic and strange to most of the population of the USSR, and especially in the Soviet imperial center – Moscow and *the European* Soviet republics.

Achievements in the cultural sphere, which received a compulsory symbolic recognition at the all-Union level but were primarily Azerbaijani-oriented, were aimed at representing the progress of the Soviet project to modernize the backward eastern periphery. As a side effect, this sort of rapid nationalization alienated many non-ethnic Azerbaijani Bakuvians who were not supposed to be integrated in the Azerbaijani imaginary community. An emphasis was put on the creation of national specialists (indigenization), and in the late 1960-1970s, it became more and more difficult for Russian-speaking Bakuvians, ethnic Russians, Jews, Armenians and others, to compete with Azerbaijanis who migrated to the city en masse from rural areas. This situation led those inhabitants of the city, whose career ambitions went beyond the narrow confines of national cultural development, to either leave Baku (and, more broadly, the Azerbaijani SSR) or participate in the creation of a self-sufficient Russian-speaking urban community of Bakuvians.

However, a powerful array of the Russian-speaking population of Baku that numbered in hundreds of thousands successfully confronted the nationalization of the capital of the Azerbaijan SSR during the Soviet period. Both the size and intellectual resources of the community were quite enough to produce a powerful counter-discourse of urban *cosmopolitanism*. It was also promoted by the controversial Soviet ideology, which on the one hand was pro-nationalization of the cultural sphere, and on the other

hand (and especially in the post-war years) maintained the dominant status of the Russian language[128].

At the plenary session of the Azerbaijani Communist Party in June 1959, Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, Abdulla Bayramov, criticized attempts to promote the official status of the Azerbaijani language made by Mirza Ibrahimov, Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Council, and a number of other cultural figures and high-ranking republican officials[129] and stressed that:

> "If Baku was the city where up to 90-95 per cent or even 80 per cent of residents were Azerbaijanis, and 3-6 per cent of residents belonged to other nations, then perhaps to some extent it would be marginally possible to excuse talks about a shift in institutions to Azerbaijani language. But according to the latest census, Azerbaijanis make up only 38 per cent of all Baku residents and the remaining 62 per cent are representatives of other nations. [...] Yes, geographically and territorially it is the capital of Azerbaijan, no one will take it away from us, but Baku is a hometown for representatives of all the peoples of the Soviet Union" (Hasanli 2009: 559).

Socio-cultural context in which the community of Bakuvians was being formed in Soviet times was determined by the growing contradiction between the nationalization program and low interest of Russian-speaking residents of the capital to adhere to it. During these years, to be a Bakuvian meant to treat with marked indifference the ethnicity of, and especially the religious preferences of the members of the urban community. Instead, urban habitus and social capital of a Russian-speaking native of Baku became increasingly important.

Cultural boundaries between the Russian-speaking Bakuvians and the rest of the population of the Republic were constantly strengthened. A provincial citizen of the Republic often strived to get to Baku. A Bakuvian was oriented towards Moscow and Leningrad, which attracted him or her as centers of culture and developed urban life.

[128]Officially, Russian was not the state language in the USSR, and, particularly, in the Azerbaijan SSR, where this status was secured for the Azerbaijani language. However, Russian was the de facto dominant language in Soviet Baku though it yielded its position to the Azerbaijani language in other cities of the Republic and, especially, in rural areas.

[129]In August 1956, the government of the Republic raised the official status of the Azerbaijani language. In addition, in the 1950s, the local government tried to make the Azerbaijani language a must for teaching in schools with Russian as the language of instruction. Mainly, it referred to Baku, where by "early 1959, there were 96,893 students studying in [...] Russian-language schools, 46,115 of whom were Russians or Russian-speaking" [i.e. they were not ethnic Azerbaijanis] (Hasanli Ibid.: 546).

Ambitious Bakuvians “often left the city to study and stay forever in the imperial metropolis. The modern discourse of pride for Soviet cosmopolitan Baku appeals to the names of the Nobel Prize winner, physicist Lev Landau, conductor and cellist Mstislav Rostropovich, the well-known pianist Bella Davidovich, as well as opera and pop singer Muslim Magomayev who were born and lived for a while in the city.” All of them reached success and earned world-wide fame in Moscow. Besides them, “Tahir Salahov, who was born in Baku, [...] and was living and working in Moscow for many years [...] is an artist widely known in the post-Soviet space. The only writer, who is well-known outside Azerbaijan, is detective author Chingiz Abdullaev” (Rumyantsev 2011). Only Baku-born Abdullayev from among those listed above remains a permanent resident of Baku to this day.

Abdullayev, a Russian-speaking Bakuvian who remained in the city, took interest in “Western music”, read Russian, French, British, and American classic authors, tried to dress like an imaginary European, and, with rare exceptions, did not know much about Azerbaijani national culture that was being created in his hometown. And it's not just that the Azerbaijani national music or literature could not compete with the European one on equal terms. It was not only a cultural choice. It was a way of everyday symbolic marking the boundaries of the urban community.

In turn, the preference for Russian as opposed to Azerbaijani language in different contexts could be both symbolic and pragmatic. Good knowledge of Russian substantially increased opportunities for mobility within the entire territory of the USSR. European movies and literature were translated, primarily, into Russian. At the same time, fluency in Russian (an important element of a Bakuvian’s social capital) made it easy to differentiate “ours” from “aliens” in the everyday urban life, in particular, to distinguish against migrants from rural regions of the Republic who were pejoratively labeled “chushka” (piggish persons, piglets).

Of course, different people resided in the city. And among the Russian-speaking Bakuvians were those who were interested in the Azerbaijani national culture. But to become “one of theirs”, to be accepted among the Bakuvians (and to have the necessary urban habitus), one had to attend the Russian Drama Theatre, not the Azerbaijani Dramatic Theatre and to prefer jazz and later rock and European pop music. It was important to read Dumas and Hugo, Conan Doyle and Dickens, Dreiser, and Mark Twain,

Feuchtwanger, Remarque, Dostoyevsky, Pasternak, and Akhmatova, but it was quite unnecessary to know and read local classic authors or listen to national *mugham*.[130]

One had to be a Bakuvian – a European (as it was considered fashionable – to be *a cosmopolitan*[131]), but not a native of a rural area, for whom Russian was not the mother tongue. In fact, the Russian-speaking urban community of Bakuvians was an unplanned by-product of imperial (Russian and especially Soviet) domination. The ensuing phase of much deeper nationalization of Baku that came with the collapse of the USSR, the state that contributed to mass migration of the population and sponsored the widespread use of the Russian language, was bound to entail major changes in the lives of members of this community.

After the Soviet Union: Back to Europe?

Although to a lesser degree than Baku, significant transformations also awaited the communities of Odessites and Leningraders. For almost three decades after the collapse of the *Eastern bloc*, the situation has changed repeatedly. Numerous post-Soviet crises and conflicts, new interpretations of the past, and changed economic and interstate relations have left their mark on the socio-cultural and architectural landscapes of the cities. Residents of Leningrad, Odessa and Baku experienced substantially similar processes in different ways. All three cities have suddenly proved to be in independent countries identified as both national and post-Soviet ones.[132] A symbol of the coming changes was yet another renaming of the city on the Neva, which led to the transformation of yesterday's *Leningraders* to *Petersburgers*. Although Odessites and Bakuvians did not

[130] The traditional system of musical performance, widespread in the Middle East and Central Asia, including in Azerbaijan.

[131] Bruce Grant stressed that many "recent works on cosmopolitanism" see this phenomenon "as a product of particular social contexts, rather than as the adoption or near-adoption of a distant European model." Regarding the discourse of Baku as a cosmopolitan city, Grant also notes that: "To look back on Baku in the 1970s was not necessarily to reach for Europe [...]. What seems more important is that the cosmopolitan ideal more commonly appeared as an act of reaching itself, a respite from the older, more express ideologisms of the international, while still holding out for the right social mixing, the right kind of condominium agreement that the Caucasus region has long been obliged to go in search of" (2010: 125, 135).

[132] National projects and ideologies in each country vary considerably. But since this is a topic of another study, I will not dwell on the analysis of these differences. To read on transformation of state institutions, the specifics of political regimes and nationalization processes that occurred in the three countries in the post-Soviet period, see: (Kuzio 1998; Simon 2002; Buhbe 2007; Sakwa, ed, 2009; Wilson 2009:. 152-310; Taylor 2011; Bolukbasi 2011: 179-212; Rumyantsev 2014).

need to rename their city after the Soviet Union had become history, the *chronotope*[133] has undergone significant changes here as well.

New state ideologies constructed in Russia, Ukraine and Azerbaijan, among other things, imply a certain reconstruction of discourses of *"civilizational"* belonging (*West* or *East*, as part of *Europe* or *non-Europe*). Thus, "The debates on Russia's attitude to the West" and its "special way" were revived again after the collapse of the Soviet Union. "The rivalry" between the same "two poles treating Russia as part of Europe or not part of it" remained determinant (Malinova 2009: 5). It is difficult to identify which of them enjoys great sympathy among Russian citizens. It can be asserted that perception of Russia *as part of Europe* is widespread in the environment of the modern Russian political establishment. Similar ideas are shared by many intellectuals (scientists, writers, journalists, artists and so on).

However, it is more important that "the debate about Russia's belonging to Europe vividly illustrates the paradoxical and contradictory nature of the Russian society's self-determination." Historian and political scientist Vyacheslav Morozov, the author of this statement, stresses "that Russian politicians, scientists, public figures consider it necessary to constantly insist on Russia's belonging to Europe as on something that is self-evident. For example, Russia's *Europeanness* was emphasized many times in modern history in publications and speeches of highest-ranking politicians from Mikhail Gorbachev declaring '*We are Europeans*' to Vladimir Putin talking about '*a single family of our 'Greater Europe'"*. [134]

At the same time, there are very popular *civilizational* discourses, in the context of which Russia may be recognized as part of the constructed European space, but its specific features and differences from the imaginary *West* are accentuated. It is also *part of Europe*, but with its specific character. A few years after the day when Putin said the

[133]Of course, I do not refer to a "formally meaningful category of literature" (Bakhtin 1975: 234). The chronotope (spatial-temporal frame), according to Mikhail Bakhtin, is a broader term. In my view, it serves to highlight the specifics of the construction of urban communities in a given time and place. In our case, that particular time was the Soviet post-war decades (1950-1980s), when it was possible to observe a relatively stable unity of the specifics of time and urban space, within which a special urban habitus and social capital were produced and passed on. Socio-cultural transformations are still ongoing, and it is difficult to speak about a new sustainable post-Soviet chronotope. Everyday memory refers to the same post-war chronotope. Intellectuals are more focused on searching for new interpretations of historical processes, events and characters of the 18-20th centuries attributed to St Petersburg, Odessa and Baku.

[134]In the same symbolically crucial 2003, the popular post-Soviet era magazine *Neprikosnovenniy Zapas* (Emergency Rations. Debates on Politics and Culture) responded to these discussions, which have never lost their relevance, by a special number, where one of the topics was well-formulated in the form of a question – "The Last March to Europe?". The same issue contains an article by V. Morozov, whose quote is used in the text (Morozov, 2003).

The words of Russian President Vladimir Putin sounded in his "Address at the luncheon in honor of the 300th anniversary of St Petersburg" on May 31, 2003, http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/22015

above words, Vladislav Surkov, the Deputy Head of his administration, formulates the ideological concept of "sovereign democracy". He thus acts as opponent to "*the clamorous party of 'intellectuals' for whom the sun rises in the West.*" But at the same time, he says that "*Not to drop out of Europe, to stick to the West is a core element for Russia's development*." With regard to this version of the state ideology, Russia remains one of the "most influential European nations".[135] *Sovereignty* is a 'young democracy' (i.e. the political regime established in Russia) from which one cannot demand too much. *Russia*'s unwillingness *to 'obey' Europe* and its claims to the equal-partner status are declared within this ideological doctrine. Though it is not an EU member, it is *also a European* state.

Despite bold statements made by prominent politicians, one may state that ranks of those who perceive Russia as a *non-European country* are also numerous. In one of his many publications, Odessite and famous historian Alexander Yanov, who was exiled to the United States in 1970s, talked with bitter sarcasm about "a reaction of eggheads" to his original concept of Russia's *Europeanness*. In the fall of 2000, he held a series of presentations of his next book "Russia against Russia 1825-1921: Essays on the history of Russian nationalism." By his own admission, "the majority of collocutors in many auditoriums [...] in a dozen academic institutions and seminars, in press and radio discussions, and even on television [...] has refused to imagine Russia as an integral part of Europe" (Yanov 2001: 11-13).[136]

Against the backdrop of this heated discussion, *civilizational* belonging of Petersburg is beyond any doubt. The northern capital remains the most obvious *European pole* of modern Russia. When speaking of the discourse and narratives of St Petersburg, *paradoxicality* and *inconsistency* referred to in Morozov's statement, or the unwillingness to be *an integral part of Europe* which Yanov dealt with, are not observed. The discourse of Petersburg invariably claims a 'proud' right of this Russian city to be identified as truly European. This idea was most clearly expressed by Putin in his brief but informative speeches made on the occasion of the 300th anniversary of "the cultural capital" in May

[135]V. Surkov (2006), Nationalization of the Future. Expert № 43 (537), http://magazines.russ.ru/nz/2003/4/kniaz-pr.html

[136]I will stress once again that the goal I keep in mind is not to provide a detailed review of *civilizational* discourses and ideologies. Yet, it is important to determine the place occupied by St Petersburg, Odessa and Baku in the context of these discourses. The magnitude of the distance from the imaginary *West / Europe, which also serves to* define Peterburgers' differences with the *rest of 'their'* country, is an important component of self-identification for members of urban communities. However, I would like to highlight the extreme popularity of nationalist ideologies within which the differences with *Europe/the West* are accentuated, and Russia is perceived as a special kind of *civilization* (*"*the island of Russia*"* etc.), the Eurasian concept being one obvious example (Rancour-Laferriere 2000; Laruelle 2008).

2003. He talked about "the centuries-old civilizational solidarity" which unites Russia and Europe and stressed that Petersburg "was built and grew as the capital of a completely different, European Russia." His statement that St Petersburg is also a "hometown" for him as for many other Petersburgers made his words seem more sincere. And "St Petersburg is the place", the president stressed, "where it is most evidently seen that Russia, both historically and culturally, is an integral part of Europe".[137] This speech of the currently most famous citizen of St Petersburg is the discursive reproduction of the fact known to every *genuine* member of the community. *The northern capital* is definitely a European city. This belief remains unchallenged and is heard throughout most post-Soviet discourses and narratives of St Petersburg.[138]

Odessa, for its part, remains a *purely European* city for Odessites. According to the well-known local historian Oleg Gubar, despite being "a genuine infant", Odessa is "among reputable and outstanding grand European cities" (2007: 5). Scientific secretary of the City Literary Museum, Yelena Karakina, in her turn, says that: "Both two hundred years ago and now, it [Odessa] is perceived as a piece of Europe brought by unknown forces to the ends of the earth" (2009: 14). Journalist and member of *the Worldwide Club of Odessites* Felix Kochricht notes that in October 2015, when the city hosted the *1st International Literary Festival*, lines of Alexander Pushkin's famous poems were recalled again at various venues: "Here everything breathes, diffuses Europe...".[139] The list of examples can be easily continued.

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[137]See: V. Putin "The speech at the luncheon on the occasion of the 300th anniversary of St Petersburg", ibid; V. Putin "The speech at the opening ceremony of the festival on the Neva", May 31, 2003, http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/22016

[138]Modern politicians, regional ethnographers and city historians assert its Europeanness with unfailing enthusiasm. Protesting against possible election of infamous Vitaliy Milonov, a Russian politician of the United Russia party (and one of his most conservative colleagues) to the State Duma, Maxim Reznik, a member of the City Council, stressed: "St Petersburg is a European city, but not a city with sauerkraut in its beard". I. Butakova. Maxim Reznik:
Milonov cannot represent St Petersburg in the State Duma,
https://life.ru/t/life78/412043/maksim_rieznik_milonov_nie_mozhiet_priedstavliat_pietierburgh_v_ghosdumie
The compilers of 'Fontanka' literary almanac, which has been published by the center "Peterburgovedeniye" since 2007, called "St Petersburg a European outpost of Russia" in at least one of its issues (See: To readers // The cultural-historical miscellany 'Fontanka', number 8, 2011, p. 4). Naum Sindalovski, who dedicated one of his numerous books about the city to myths about ghosts that existed in the rich imagination of its inhabitants, comes to the conclusion that: "Actually, it has to be said that such phantoms as urban ghosts [...] were the product of Western popular culture, and we have inherited them along with the other basic values of the pan-European civilization. And the fact that they have been stuck easily into the Petersburg soil proves once again that St Petersburg has become the first truly European city in a remote, godforsaken Asian Russia" (Sindalovski 2007). I can think of countless such passages and statements, as well as numerous interesting research works (See also: Zapesotsky & Mikhailov 2007; Dmitriyeva 2009; Lurie 2014).

[139]F. Kochricht "Here everything breathes, diffuses Europe..." // 'Deribasovskaya-Richelyevskaya' Odessan Miscellany, № 63 2015, p. 14-16.

However, it is more important that the place of Odessa in Europe is not so obvious in the context of the all-Ukrainian discourse. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the political and the bigger part of the intellectual and cultural elite began to actively construct a discourse on Ukraine as "a true European power". Discursive *Europeanisation* of the country was carried out most intensely after the two *revolutions – the Orange revolution* (2004-2005) and *the Euromaidan* (2013-2014). In both cases, *pro-Western / pro-European* politicians[140] came to power. Aspiration to join the EU and NATO lay at the heart of the political position. But even in the case of the seemingly very consistent European orientation of Ukraine, certain *paradoxes* and *contradictions* cannot but arise. These are clearly heard, for example, in speeches and interviews of two presidents heading *the post-revolutionary* governments – Viktor Yushchenko and Pyotr Poroshenko. Paradoxicality is attributed to a lack of a visible boundary between political and cultural discourses. Or, in other words, the cultural and historical discourses are extremely politicized.

Hopes and claims for membership in the EU and NATO are based not only on attempts to conduct social and economic reforms, but also on emphatic criticism of the Russian political regime. Discursively, Ukraine as a purely European country (culturally and historically) is opposed to Russia as an *anti-European* state. Claiming the status of the country that is *the last frontier* separating Europe from *non-Europe*[141], Ukraine is expecting privileges from membership in the EU and NATO, while making certain compromises in the political sphere to fulfill membership criteria.

In the context of the official discourse, on the one hand, Ukraine is certainly a European country in terms of culture (civilization) and geography. In June 2005, in an interview to the French newspaper *Le Figaro*, Yushchenko stated that he is not going "to prove once again [...] that the Ukrainians are also Europeans. Geographically, Ukraine is situated in the very heart of Europe. Our history is another indication of the fact that

[140]See: (Templin 2008; Besters-Dilger 2011; Marples 2015).

[141]Modern Ukrainian politicians and highest-ranking officials often stress this difference in their speeches. For example, one of President Poroshenko's statements was made during his meeting with Bulgarian President Rosen Plevneliev on June 30, 2015. According to him, Russia and Ukraine "are two different universes. Our universe is European values, freedom, democracy and modernization of the country, economy and political system." It is obvious that Russia is opposed to all these values and aspirations. See: Prezydenty Ukrayiny ta Bolhariyi obhovoryly pytannya bezpeky ta vprovadzhennya reform, http://www.president.gov.ua/news/prezidenti-ukrayini-ta-bolgariyi-obgovorili-pitannya-bezpeki-35612
In January 2016, Deputy Minister of Infrastructure of Ukraine Volodymyr Omelyan left an even more straightforward post on his Facebook page: "It should be clearly understood on the border between Ukraine and Russia: in the West, there is a civilization, in the East – barbarians."
See: Volodymyr Omelyan,
https://www.facebook.com/volodymyr.omelyan/posts/10153520317208439?pnref=story

Ukraine has always been a European country."[142] On the other hand, to be a "truly" European country (i.e. EU member) is a political privilege that can be granted through perseverance. And "we" (Ukraine and *Ukrainian people*) are still on the way to this goal. On one side of the scale there are culture, history, geography and protection of borders from *non-European Russia*. A still unobtainable political status lies on the other side. As a result, Ukraine has yet to evolve into Europe, even after breaking with its *Asian-Russian-Soviet* past.

In November 2013, Yushchenko conceded that "Ukraine is not perfect", but if you give it time and chance, it will turn into a European country similar to any other one. In the same interview, he states that "Ukraine is a European country [...] It is, territorially, the largest state in Europe", and "Therefore it is very important what principles and values will sprout up in this space – European or Asian ones."

At some point, Yushchenko begins to use the language of Orientalist discourse: "For me, the European choice is having no alternative. I believe that my country will never go back to Asia."[143] Paradoxically, Ukraine has had a chance to be part of Europe (in its *true* place) and in Asia (as a Russian *colony*). So, essentially, Ukrainians are Europeans in terms of their culture and history, but, at the same time, they still need to be taught *Europeanness*. Simultaneously, the very desire to learn becomes self-sufficient proof of their *true* (primordial) belonging to Europe. A refusal to choose Asia/Russia (backward and oppressive) is aimed at enhancing this position.

In his speeches, Poroshenko also recreates the discourse on Ukraine as a European country in a similar paradoxical form. In May 2016, at Kiev celebrations of Europe Day, Poroshenko proclaimed to the nation that "Europe is Ukraine's future, its historical spirit. Europe is a national idea, which reigns in the hearts of Ukrainians, unites the Ukrainian people and the whole of our country." There was the Russian-Soviet period between the European present and history, and only after discarding its legacy, Ukraine will once again be able "to return home – the common European home – as soon as possible." Being

[142] "Europe is not only the European Union". Yushchenko's interview, http://korrespondent.net/world/worldabus/124393-le-figaro-evropa-eto-ne-tolko-evropejskij-soyuz-intervyu-yushchenko

[143] "Viktor Yushchenko: It is necessary to fight for Ukraine and take it to the EU such as it is", http://ru.delfi.lt/news/politics/viktor-yuschenko-za-ukrainu-nuzhno-borotsya-i-brat-ee-v-es-takoj-kak-ona-est.d?id=63369542

under the rule of *barbaric* Russia for a long time, the Ukrainians have lost the necessary qualities for membership in the EU, and now they should be restored through reforms.[144]

The contradictions and paradoxes multiply in any attempt to determine the place of Odessa in the context of these discourses. For the Odessites or Russians, it is certainly a European city. For many other citizens of Ukraine, Odessa's *Europeanness* is not so obvious. This is because this city, along with many Odessites, is suspected of pro-Russian sympathies. This was the site of violent clashes between *Euromaidan* supporters and their opponents that led to the deaths of dozens of people in May 2014.

It is not the confrontation and obvious split among Odessites that is important. The dominant local cultural, linguistic and historical tradition is more relevant. And now, even after the Euromaidan, the Odessan version of the Russian language dominates in urban narratives and discourses. For Odessites, their city is special because the great Russian poet Alexander Pushkin stayed there and praised it in his poems. The prominent Ukrainian kobzar (bard) Taras Shevchenko is not associated with Odessa even though he spent ten years in military service there, and one of the city parks bears his name.

Reconstructed in its original place, a monument to the great Russian empress Catherine II and the founding fathers of Odessa[145] has become the symbol of rejection of the Soviet legacy and return to the *roots*. The building of the first version of the monument commenced with pomp in honor of the centenary of the founding of the city in the late 19th century. The monument itself was inaugurated in May 1900, then dismantled by the Bolsheviks in the same month of May 1920. "In 2007, the monument, in all its splendor, returned to its rightful place [...]. Its restoration proved to be a problem. For modern Ukraine, the Russian queen [...] is a pretty odious figure. [...] But ultimately for the first time in many decades, the city has received an adornment matching its historic European architecture" (Karakina, ibid: 220-223; Gubar, ibid: 14-44).

It is hard to say how much Odessites' attempts to reconcile memory of Odessa's *golden age* during the Russian Empire with modern Ukrainian *pro-European* nationalism will be successful. Local intellectuals are constantly forced to undertake attempts to separate local memory from the imperial one. When mentioning the same monument, Oleg Gubar stresses: "No political speculations which incorrectly typify the monument

[144]"Ukrayina vpevneno postaye v obrazi novitnoyi, perspektyvnoyi yevropejskoyi derzhavy – Prezydent u zvernenni do Dnya Yevropy",
http://www.president.gov.ua/news/ukrayina-vpevneno-postaye-v-obrazi-novitnoyi-perspektivnoyi-37147
[145]Joseph de Ribas, Franz de Volan, his serene Highness Prince Grigoriy Potemkin-Tavrichesky and his serene Highness Prince Platon Zubov.

to the founders of Odessa as a certain symbol of autocracy are acceptable. This is an outstanding work of art, a paramount monument of our history and culture." (Ibid: 44).

This local urban version of *our* history and culture obviously collides with the dominant Ukraine-wide national discourse, in the context of which imperial memory is marginalized. Odessites cannot just repress the memory of their own *golden age*. In this case they also repress a large part of memory associating the city with Europe and making it special. In this regard, Odessa is far from being *the most European* city in Ukraine. The *pearl of the Black Sea* is obviously second to Lviv, which is the unofficial capital of western Ukraine, where there is no place for imperial or Soviet memory. The history of this city and its local memory do not conflict with the official discourse. As a result, it is Lviv, not Odessa, that becomes the country's most European city.[146]

On the contrary, in the case of the Baku discourse and narratives, there were no apparent contradictions with the post-Soviet national ideology. Baku is *organic* in the context of official nationalism, as the *historic* capital of Azerbaijan and its *most European* city. First, contradictions are removed through consistent nationalization of imperial and Soviet memory of everyday life in the city and its history. Fortunately, the frame of the Baku narratives (memories, studies, literature) is extremely poor as compared to the Peterburgian and Odessan ones. There are precious few texts opposing the nationalizing version, and they do not exert any significant influence.

Second, contradictions are overcome through the construction of a discourse and myths about the *historical cultural ties* between Azerbaijan and Europe, which reinterprets the imperial-Soviet attempts to modernize a *backward Eastern* periphery. This is no longer a relationship of subordination dictated by imperial colonialism, but a free willingness to learn more and to borrow from Europe whose *civilizational* space also partially accommodates Azerbaijan. In this context, the *Europeanization* of the architectural landscape of Baku's historical center is regarded as a merit of the local (mostly Muslim Turks) oil barons who invited European architects to build their palaces and mansions[147].

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[146] About Lviv see: (Czaplicka, ed., 2005).

[147]The trend towards European-style (i.e. *modern* and *not eastern*) buildings, façade designs, interior finishing, furnishing, etc. came to Baku together with the Russian Empire. Most professional designers, who significantly contributed to the reconstruction of the city, were primarily invited by the Tsar′s administration and held public positions. As part of the post-Soviet discourse, architects from among, for example, ethnic Poles or Germans were not emissaries and government officials of the Russian Empire. Their presence and activity in Baku are evidence of long-standing, steady voluntary and friendly Azerbaijani-Polish and Azerbaijani-German ties and relations.

In other words, in the context of the dominant nationalizing discourse, Baku, which had long been the peripheral imperial city with a very ethnically, culturally and confessionally diverse population, became a *historic capital* of the national state belonging to the European *civilizational* space. The amazingly rapid transformation was promoted not only by a habit of perceiving Baku as the capital of the national republic and center of production of high Azerbaijani culture during the years of the Soviet nationality policy. Another major role was played by the almost immediate ethnic homogenization of the population of the city whose Russian-speaking citizens (primarily Armenians and Jews, as well as Russians, Azerbaijanis, etc.) have massively fled after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the outburst of the Karabakh conflict.[148]

At the very beginning of the 1990s, Baku, which had been a role model city of successful Europeanisation and desecularization of *the backward Muslim East* for many years, became the capital of an independent country that has been constitutionally defined as secular. Since the late 1990s, Azerbaijan had been increasingly active in attempting to establish close contacts with the EU. As a result, since 2001, Azerbaijan has become a full member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. A symbolic representation of Azerbaijan's image as a *European* country took place on the stage of the luxurious *Baku Crystal Hall* built especially for the 2012 Eurovision Song Contest. And a few years later, at the Olympic Stadium, which was built to host the first European Games in Baku in 2015.

At the same time, Azerbaijan presents itself as a Muslim state. Islam, within the framework of the official national discourse, is the crucial component of national and religious traditions, a commitment to which the President and high-ranking officials constantly emphasize. Religious monuments (mosques, sacred places) and "values" become "national treasure", and the country joins the "Muslim world"[149]. That is, that part of the world which is strongly associated with *East*. This new image of Baku, as a capital of *an eastern* and *Muslim* state, was approved in 2009, when Baku acted as the "capital of Islamic Culture" (Huseynova & Rumyantsev 2011). In the same year, a huge complex of *Taza Pir Mosque* emerged in the city. Somewhat later, in 2014, Bakuvians

[148]The Karabakh conflict has had a huge impact on changes in the composition of Baku′s population and the specifics of the process of nationalization of its socio-cultural landscape. However, it does not serve this paper to describe the causes and vicissitudes of the conflict. I will only mention those works that deserve the most attention: (Suny 1993; Waal 2003).

[149]See, for example: Speech by President Ilham Aliyev at the opening ceremony of Taza Pir Mosque after reconstruction (06.07.2009), http://azertag.az/ru/xeber/-707435; Ilham Aliyev got familiarized with the conditions created in the religious Imamzade Complex in Ganja (17.02.2016), http://ru.president.az/articles/17804

were able to admire the 95-meter high minarets of *Heydar Mosque,* the country's biggest mosque.

As a result, the entire country and its main city are discursively located in the space between two worlds – *East* and *West*. According to positivistic physical geography, "Azerbaijan is a transcontinental country. About 12 per cent of its territory, including Baku's northern outskirts, is located on the European continent" (Qajar 2015: 106). Unlike the geography, the hardly measurable *proportion* of *European* features to *non-European* ones in politics and culture varies from event to event. The vast majority of those events take place in Baku. And it is here where one finds 12 per cent of European features geographically allocated to Azerbaijan.

The work of the imagination of politicians, writers, journalists and other actors, who have the power to create a powerful and public Bakuvian discourse, contributes to the transformation of the city into a cultural space constructed of mixed *European and Asian* meanings, symbols and events. This is where East and West discursively coexist and most boldly intertwine.

In 2002, the Azerbaijani authorities announced their desire to implement "The State Program on the Development of Tourism."[150] A number of commercials and documentaries have been filmed with the support of the authorities to this end. These attempts to touristically exoticize the country reflect an aspiration to consolidate Azerbaijan's image as a bordering socio-cultural space, where one can see the transition from East to West and vice versa. The visual imagery of one of the most famous promos, which have been shown on CNN and Euronews television channels since 2010, imposed the following idea on the audience: "Azerbaijan – European Charm of the Orient."[151] This metaphor used variously but conveying the same meaning (e.g. "Azerbaijan is a bridge between East and West"[152]) has become a hallmark of the country.[153] What part of this bridge between *different worlds* enables us to see *the meeting* of East and West? This question can be answered with a phrase sounded in another popular TV commercial filmed for the previously mentioned first European games: "Baku - where East meets

[150]The development of tourism, http://www.azerbaijans.com/content_1037_ru.html

[151]The year 2011, when the promo was still screened, has been declared the Year of Tourism in the country. See: Azerbaijan - European Charm of the Orient, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pJoakkDFT3Q

[152] This phrase is a title of the book, the author of which is known as a Russian "political analyst". Its publication was supported by the Embassy of Azerbaijan to the United Kingdom. (Sigov 2015).

[153] In 2014, a short documentary by film director Maria Ibragimova was made with the aim of developing tourism. Its title was drawn from the same commercial. See: "Azerbaijan – European Charm of the Orient – the best touristic documentary of the film festival in Serbia", http://www.trend.az/life/tourism/2320503.html

West"[154]. In the context of the official political, cultural and tourism discourses, Baku, as the capital of the country discursively placed in the gray borderland between different worlds, turns into a compact space where the essence of such location at the junction of two different worlds is most clearly seen. This newly-constructed essence of the city that had previously identified as European and cosmopolitan can be seen in its most radical (compared to St Petersburg and Odessa) reconstruction of its architectural landscape.

New cities:
Newly erected monster buildings and new residents

Two processes which were ongoing simultaneously and similar in content enable us to estimate the depth of the changes that took place in all three cities after the collapse of the USSR. *The first process* is associated with the new (especially commercial) development accompanied by not only restoration of the old centers and monuments, but also by their concurrent loss and destruction (especially in Baku). Restoration/destruction and post-Soviet development in St Petersburg, Odessa and Baku differed in their intensity. However, it is possible to observe a crucial similarity among events in all three cities. One of the results is the loss of many places of everyday memory of St Petersburgers, Odessites and Bakuvians (primarily houses, yards, parks, cafes, restaurants and so forth). During the post-Soviet years, there was another sharp reconstruction of the cultural landscapes.

The second process is a significant change in the population composition. In this case, we can also talk about significant differences. This process has had the biggest impact on Baku, where not only the collapse of the USSR and the economic crisis, but also the Karabakh conflict have contributed to the forced and most massive emigration of Bakuvians. However, despite the obvious differences, these processes have a lot in common. The place of immigrating residents of Leningrad, Odessa and Baku was occupied by people *with other* social capital and habitus. Often it was the people from the rural areas. And it was in the 1990-2000s, when there was a rapid transformation of the communities of Leningraders/Petersburgers, Odessites and Bakuvians into transnational

[154]At the moment, there are several variations of such orientalistic methaphors. See: "Baku - where East meets West", https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UFIBuOt8qCs; "Eastern temperament and western charisma: Baku city of contrasts", https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vsEy73cpGIo

ones, against the backdrop of a sharp change in the social, cultural, political fields and discursive modes.

Changes in political regimes, economic crises and transformations, amidst which all these processes were taking place, were also accompanied by the growth of civil activity of citizens. The real impact of social movements, various initiative groups and organizations on changes in the urban environment remained small. Even so, non-governmental organizations and activists succeeded in making symbolically significant progress in some cases. Despite the growth of authoritarian tendencies (especially in Russia and Azerbaijan), some voices in media outlets continued to express their dissatisfaction with urban policy. Sometimes there were even public protests (in Petersburg and Odessa).[155]

As a rule, criticism is focused on issues of quality control over restoration works, new commercial development and infrastructure problems. Practices of criticizing the city authorities by civil society leaders were formed due to opportunities of discussing the Soviet legacy that emerged in the late 1980s. In the 1990s, when funds for construction and, especially, restoration were apparently insufficient, there were often simply no new themes for criticism except the Soviet-era urban policies. In the late 1980s and the early 1990s, discourse on socialist cities' prosperity prevailing in the public space was replaced by a number of new competing discourses. In the context of one of them, which was especially popular in the situation with the collapse of the USSR, the post-war years of the Soviet regime were a period of decline for Leningrad, Odessa and Baku. These beautiful cities were gradually turning into ruins and losing their uniqueness, due to disregard of the old centers and the proliferation of typically faceless Soviet housing developments. This discourse still retains some influence.

[155]Baku has never seen the formation of sustainable urban movements, groups or networks of civic activists opposing or supporting any construction, social, environmental or infrastructure projects. No action groups or movements consisting of intellectuals (including architects and urbanists) who have tried to influence changes in the architectural landscape, and the social and environmental situation in the urban area have succeeded in their size or impact whatsoever. All collective actions that were in the least bit impactful were carried out by tenants whose houses were threatened with demolition. Among the most extensive and much-talked-of cases of public protests were actions carried out by tenants of demolished residential quarters located in the old part of the city, in Fizuli, M. Aliyev and Badalbeyli streets in 2010-2012. The demolished old houses, whose inhabitants protested against their demolition and low monetary compensation, were replaced by the newly laid-out Winter Boulevard. In 2014-2016, the process of beautification through demolition of the city's historic quarters continued in Sovetskaya street (Nariman Narimanov Avenue), and caused another storm of protests among the townspeople living in this area. Hundreds of buildings included in the official register of historical and cultural architectural monuments protected by the state were located in the territory of the quarters at risk. Some non-governmental organizations and civil society activists tried to organize spontaneous protests of tenants without great success (Ismayil & Hasanov 2012; Abbasov, et. al., 2014: 11-15).

In the winter of 1990, one of the founders of the city center rehabilitation project exclaims in the first issue (Issue #0) of the Worldwide Odessa News: "So, Odessa has turned into a kind of historical ruins. It's scary." However, the authors of the Project-Odessa program are still full of hope for the development of urban tourism, though they believe that "this way is the only chance to save the historic center of Odessa from impending death."[156] "Unfortunately, it should be noted that no eye-catching building has been erected in Baku over the last 2-3 decades", Agabek Sultanov, a well-known local intellectual and eccentric clinical psychiatrist, and a permanent member of the newly created *the Bakinets Society*, wrote in 1991. "The beauty of the city is not maintained anymore; stereotyped, honeycomb-like houses are constructed...".[157] "Let us remember what Leningrad looked like a quarter of a century ago [in the late Soviet period]", offer Ansberg and Margolis, members of the Memorial Society (St Petersburg). "The more tightly a ring of faceless, standardized buildings and so-called 'dormitory suburbs', symbolizing the era of total standardization, skirted the historic center, the more deeply uniqueness and enduring value of old Petersburg continuing to deteriorate and degrade was felt" (2009: 6).

Only a few years later, in the mid-1990s, the critical "anti-Soviet' discourse will be competing with discourse of nostalgia for recent life under *the Soviet power*. This is not nostalgia for the Soviet standardized skyscrapers or empty shops, but the memory of usual places for socializing and rest –memories of friends, neighbours, relatives, classmates and colleagues who have been scattered across different cities and countries. Quite often, the radical reconstruction of the cities, the careless attitude towards the old centers and historical heritage, and the large-scale and often unsystematic housing development in the second half of the 1990s – 2000s intensified nostalgia for a past that was being lost before their very eyes.

The 2000s were marked by the revival of urban life and growth (for various reasons), and of the interest of ruling regimes and commercial developers in reconstruction and dynamic construction in St Petersburg, Baku and, to a lesser extent, in Odessa. This growing interest was accompanied not only by increasingly large-scale construction projects, but also by a new wave of criticism towards architectural tastelessness threatening to destroy the charm of the old centers.

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[156]Y. Olenin. Rehabilitation of the historical center, "Worldwide Odessa News" newspaper, November-December 1990, p. 15.

[157]A. Sultanov. With love to Baku, "Bakinskiy Rabochiy" (Baku Worker) newspaper, June 26,1991, p. 2.

Since the late 1990s, urban activists and intellectuals have been competing in picking suitable names for newly erected commercial buildings: “faceless”, “growing like mushrooms after the rain”, “anthills", “phallo-high-risers”, “monsters”, etc. At the beginning of the construction boom in Baku, in 2003, prominent Azerbaijani journalist and civic activist Elmar Huseynov described the changes he witnessed in the “city that we have lost”, writing, “They sprout up like mushrooms after the rain. It seems, once you stop for a moment on the roadside a new monster will pop up in front of you. Built under modern projects, these high-rise buildings overtop the rest of Baku are like Gulliver in the country of Lilliputians. Although [...] they far more resemble phallic symbols in their appearance. Their irrelevance became a proverb, and architectural awkwardness excites nothing but obscenities.”[158]

Following Huseynov, journalist Joseph Goldstein cautions, “The number of newly constructed buildings in the historical part of the city has already exceeded the critical level, which means that, unfortunately, we will not be able to return the old city with its unique architecture. Baku is no longer a European city with well-established architectural traditions and trends, and it turns into an Asian city with flashy high-rise buildings as symbols of new life. [...] It should be recognized that Baku, particularly its central part, is under serious threat. A threat of engineering disaster.”[159]

A few years later, in the midst of the construction boom, Rahman Badalov, a famous local intellectual, wrote when sharing his impressions: “A big city cannot be reconstructed [... overnight] We have dealt shortly with it. ‘Baku pulls down its past’ journalists Khadija Ismayilova and Ulviya Asadzade wrote bitterly [… describing a] ‘ Barbarian invasion’ [...] As if our government has decided to prove that the history of the Big City starts with their rule and everything has to reflect their interests and taste. [...] It will not be an exaggeration if we call all these government’s actions a crime.”[160]

Often chaotic but large-scale demolition of old buildings and construction of high-rise buildings in historical quarters in the late 1990s – early 2000s were gradually supplemented by more active intervention of the political regime in the urban renewal process. The government’s efforts became most obvious and intensive on the threshold

[158]Elmar Huseynov, who was perhaps the most famous and popular Azerbaijani journalist in the late 1990s and early 2000s, was deadly shot in Baku, in the entrance hall of his apartment building in March 2005. He was not only a journalist but also a publisher and editor-in-chief of the Monitor Weekly and Monitor magazines, and the newspaper “Baku Boulevard”. E. Huseynov. Pyramids of Heydarism, Monitor magazine, № 4, January 28, 2003, p. 3.

[159] J. Goldstein. Construction Boom-Barash, Monitor magazine, № 48, February 14, 2004, p. 4.

[160] R. Badalov. Life in a big city, Part 1. http://www.radioazadlyg.org/a/24768993.html

of Eurovision in the capital of Azerbaijan in 2012. The more so because, by this time, the country had seen the peak of incomes from the sale of energy carriers (oil and gas). The government's interest was reflected in the demolition of entire historic quarters, the large-scale reconstruction of the city's old part (including facades of numerous old buildings) as well as the creation of new architectural symbols for new Baku, among which include several impressive buildings such as Baku Chrystal Hall, a concert hall built specially for the Eurovision Song Contest.[161]

Paradoxically, Baku hosting the European Song Contest in 2012, as 2011 winners, leads to faster transformation into *the eastern city*, while *European charm* is lost with no less speed. At a certain point, the authorities announced their plan to transform the capital into Dubai on the Caspian. To choose this *ideal* is to throw off the western mask. Whether or not leaders and executives ever seriously believed in the Europeanness of Baku, it is clear that without an external, imperial, *Europeanizing* force, the city's *eastern* features have quickly overpowered.[162]

Like most others visiting new Baku, political analyst Thomas de Waal reveals, "I was shocked by how different it looked [...] A city of shabby elegance is fast turning into a new Dubai on the Caspian. But old Baku is paying a price" (Waal 2011). Thus, among other things, the price for an imaginary *Dubaization* of Baku[163] becomes the permanently shrinking *European* historical center.[164]

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[161]Along with the total tastelessness of the absolute majority of post-Soviet buildings in Baku, one can see several interesting buildings including: the new building of the Carpet Museum, International Mugham Center, Heydar Aliyev Center (designed by prominent Zaha Hadid), Flame Towers and Olympic Complex built for the first European Games.

[162]Bruce Grant also mentions Doha and Shanghai when listing cities to which the power is oriented in its policy of reconstruction of Baku. One way or another, all these cities are perceived as *oriental* or *Asian* by Baku citizens and authorities controlling urban policy. Apparently, Dubai that has been chosen as an ideal (see: Grant 2014: 502; Waal 2011).

[163]The nature of urban development in Baku does not achieve a 'real' similarity of 'new Dubai' to its referent. Rather, the authorities construct a myth, through discourses of prosperity that became possible (like in the United Arab Emirates) due to oil and gas revenues. In other words, Baku, as 'new Dubai', is destined to become a symbol of successful post-Soviet modernization carried out by the authorities.

[164]According to Murad Ismayilov, "the contest – and the processes it generated – has played, or is likely to play, a dubious role as a factor in the evolution of the Western sense of Self among Azerbaijanis" (2012: 834-835). Whether or not they really consider themselves to be 'Europeans' after winning the Eurovision competition, and while hosting it in Baku, is determined by their participation. In my opinion, Ismayilov is missing some key details– importantly, the choice of the authorities to turn Baku into 'new Dubai', i.e. a state-of-the-art *oriental* city. Consequently, Baku still makes a twofold impression on visitors. In the old city, Moscow-based journalist Artyom Ryazantsev believes, "You think that you have found yourself in 'Caucasian Paris', while new large-scale construction makes you think that you are in 'Caspian Dubai". The old 'European center' contributes to this paradox, as the district continues to amaze tourists with the same orientalist exotica which attracts them to the city. In the eyes of a visitor claiming to be a European, an imaginary contrast of the landscape emphasizes its invincible eastness, or in other words, "a European city in a historically Oriental country makes an indelible impression on everyone." A. Ryazantsev. The Paradox

The situation with Odessa's historical preservation, at first glance, inspires more optimism. "Odessa is one of the few cities in the country where the historic center has been kept intact", states Yuri Nikitin, head of the NGO "Let's save Odessa ourselves", suggesting, "Certainly it has been greatly marred, but, nevertheless, there is something to be protected." *Sothern Palmira* was marred by the same high-rise buildings, and if, according to Nikitin, it is enough in some cases to only demolish upper floors in order to maintain the skyline of the old city, a number of its new buildings should be completely destroyed.[165]

However, new buildings-monsters are only part of the problem in Odessa as well. By far, the greatest danger lies in rapid decay of the old center. Nikitin's optimism seems exaggerated, if we take into account the rate of deterioration of many historical architectural monuments, due to the apparent lack of funds for their restoration and maintenance.

In an interview in 2014, local historian Oleg Gubar stated, "Many buildings are in disrepair and half-ruined condition, including the same Russov's house, the city hospital on Pasteur Street, a building of the Technical Society and a lot of others. Separate objects of cultural heritage have been destroyed in the past two decades: a row of shopping stalls on the Greek Square, aide-de-camp Richelieu-Stempkovsky's house and others. A similar fate awaits the entire historical area in the short and long-term perspective."[166]

In 2016, when Ukraine was going through political and economic crises which were the most extensive in its post-Soviet history, even the city's most widely known architectural symbol – the Potemkin Stairs – was at risk of being completely destroyed. Civic activist Vladislav Balinskiy demonstrated the dilapidation process of the city's famous monument[167] in the selection of his photos. He added pessimistic commentary to

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of Baku. What attracts Russian tourists to the capital of Azerbaijan, http://lenta.ru/articles/2016/03/07/baku/;
"This city has been and still remains oriental, to the delight of European tourists" states Mikhail Taratuta, another Moscow-based journalist. M. Taratuta. Take peaches! http://echo.msk.ru/blog/taratuta/1630696-echo/

[165]S. Ishchenko. This terrible word 'zoning' // Odessa Living, Issue # 21 (2016), http://odessa-life.od.ua/article/6801

[166]"The historic center of Odessa will be lost forever without systematic restoration" writes Oleg Gubar, about the most famous architectural monuments which are on the verge of complete destruction. https://368.media/2014/12/28/history_expert_gubar_odessa/; see, eg. M. Denisenko Odessa's houses on the edge of survival // Odessa Living, Issue 30 (2016), http://odessa-life.od.ua/article/ 6991

[167]This architectural structure acquired its present name from Sergei Eisenstein's well-known film *Battleship Potemkin* (1925). The film is not only considered a striking artwork, but also an example of employing feature film for ideological mythologization of events of the 1905-1907 revolution – the uprising of the crew on the battleship of the Black Sea Fleet and its aftermath. One of the key scenes of the film, which widely glorified the architectural monument, is the shooting of innocent Odessites on the steps – "the repression and the massacre (which did not take place, however, on the Richilieu stairway)" (Ferro 1988:

these images, stating "Behind a quite presentable picture, there are devastation, dilapidated communications, distribution of power, systematic destruction of the city through inconsiderate development and indifference of most Odessites to everything."[168]

Nevertheless, the situation in Odessa differs sharply from that in Baku. Discussions still revolve around the need to preserve the old center, while the reconstruction in Baku has almost completely broken the landscape, skyline and structure of the historic part of the city. In addition, despite *indifference of most Odessites*, there are many quite developed civil movements, groups and networks of activists in Odessa.

Communities of citizen enthusiasts who hold active civic positions, such as architects, local historians, intellectuals in the broad sense and cultural figures, do not seek mass membership. Instead, they prioritize the necessary resources to mobilize the largest number of inhabitants at critical moments. Effectively, the permanent members of these communities are public, well-known individuals who have the power to create an influential urban discourse. There are hundreds of intellectuals involved in the civic community in Odessa. In Baku, by comparison, there are hardly dozens to speak of. *The Worldwide Club of Odessites* also takes an active part in the activities aimed at preserving the historic center. In other words, the main problem of preservation efforts is not *indifference,* but a real lack of government funds, corruption and so on.[169]

Odessa's civic activists are heavily involved in the protest movement. The preparation and adoption of the Odessa City General Plan[170] in the spring of 2015, and subsequently the Zoning Plan elaborating the above document, laid the groundwork for two of the most notable social movements, "The General Protest"[171] and "Odessites

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68). Gubar explains the extent to which the construction of "this practically meaningless toy", which eventually became "a source of pride [...], an integral part of the myth of Odessa", was ruinous for the city budget (Gubar 2007: 45-59).

[168]A. Myachina. Another perspective: Odessites were shown how the Potemkin Stairs is deteriorating//Odessa Living (03.01.2016), http://odessa-life.od.ua/news/33674

[169]Corruption is a problem in all three countries and, accordingly, the cities. Land plots in the city center are invariably the most prestigious. Against the background of general corruption, absence of sound policy towards involvement of local businesses in preservation of the old city and a muddle of legislation, to preserve historical centers in varying degrees of integrity is nearly impossible without direct intervention of top government officials.

Given the high degree of corruption of the regimes, not only real financial opportunities, but also the personal political commitment of influential political figures play a significant part. For example, being a native of St Petersburg, Vladimir Putin, who wields the necessary power, contributes to preservation of his native city's historical center to a far greater degree than his predecessor Boris Yeltsin, who did not have personal ties with St Petersburg. Ilham Aliyev could do much to preserve the historical center of Baku, but he is fascinated with the idea of Dubaization of the capital. As a result, changes in the landscape of the city are the most impressive, as well as the degree of destruction of its historical part. Slightly associated personally with non-metropolitan Odessa, and being on a much tighter budget, Petro Poroshenko is interested in the condition of the city's historical center no more than other Ukrainian cities.

[170]Odessa's General Plan, http://omr.gov.ua/ru/essential/69324/

[171]The General Protest, https://new.vk.com/generalniy.protest

Against Zoning". Furthermore, in the post-Soviet years, Odessa has seen the creation of different initiative groups for the protection of separate urban monuments (such as the square of Arcadia). The active NGO "Let's save Odessa ourselves", established in April 2011, holds round tables, subbotnik (voluntary work on Saturday) and other activities involving "all non-indifferent residents of Odessa."

However, the old center is still deteriorating, and all the movements and initiative groups are not sufficiently influential. In a situation of permanent problems with funding and control over it, the historical center is threatened by serious new losses. In April 2016, there was another discussion with the participation of architects, government officials and civic activists in Odessa. The overall conclusion of the discussions was that "If the pace and chaotic nature of the development of the city center are maintained, it will not be Odessa in a couple of years."[172] Another pessimistic forecast was voiced by civic activist Svetlana Podpalaya, who believes that "The zoning project commissioned by the city administration legally shrinks the historical center fivefold only in order to enable high-rise development. In fact, only a small piece of Old Odessa compressed within a few streets will be preserved. Beyond it, new 10-18-storey high-rise buildings are planned to be constructed."[173] Many corners of *old Odessa* have already been lost forever, and high-rise buildings (*new buildings-monsters*) have been constructed close to the historical center for many years and broken an "architectural ensemble"[174], as told by the ex-head of the municipal and regional departments for protection of the monuments, Vladimir Meshcheryakov.

Against the background of the processes taking place in Baku and Odessa, the condition of the old center in St Petersburg presents in a much more favorable light. In 1991, Leningrad was the only one of the three cities that was renamed for the fourth time during the 20th century, becoming St Petersburg, while the region has kept its name, and is still called Leningrad Region. About one year before this event, "the historical center of Saint Petersburg and groups of monuments associated with it" have been included in the UNESCO World Heritage List (Lurie 2014: 23-24). However, a return to the old name did not mean the complete restoration of the former status. Petersburg retains the symbolic status of *the cultural capital*, but mostly only for Russia, not for all of the former

[172]The problem of the housing development in Odessa was discussed at the round table, http://dumskaya.net/news/problemu-zastroyki-odessy-obsudili-za-kr-000000-057938/

[173]A. Myachina. Zoning for Dummies: Odessa′s historical area will shrink fivefold // Odessa Living (06.12.2016), http://odessa-life.od.ua/news/35810

[174]I. Umanets, Y. Genova. This is not a place for high-rise buildings: how to solve five construction problems of Odessa′s center// Odessa Living, Issue 13 (2016), http://odessa-life.od.ua/article/6647

Soviet Republics. The influence of St Petersburg's myth and discourse is slowly shrinking in the post-Soviet space.

In the 1990s, due to overall socio-economic decline and the increasing significance of Moscow, St Petersburg's old center quickly decayed. The turning point came with the rise of Vladimir Putin, a native of St Petersburg, which successfully coincided with the upcoming 300th anniversary of the founding of the city.[175] According to a senior official, "During ten years of modern Russian history, not a single city in the country has received such financial resources within one and a half years. On the other hand, we have no other such city as St Petersburg, which is also celebrating its 300th anniversary."[176] Restoration works in the tremendous old city center, which had decayed during the decades of negligence, demanded an appropriate scale of financing.[177] Despite the scandals on inefficient use of allocated funds, and a number of scheduled restoration works that remain obviously incomplete, the city regains a degree of metropolitan luster.[178]

Still, regardless of financial investments and attention of the authorities, many buildings in the city center have never been restored. The quality of the works performed, in turn, is often criticized. As far back as 2012, according to the governor of St Petersburg, Georgy Poltavchenko, "St Petersburg's government has put a moratorium on demolition of buildings in the historical center. And this step was supported by the overwhelming

[175]The decree on the celebration was signed by President Boris Yeltsin. However, it is unlikely that the government would have paid so much attention to the jubilee festivities (during these days, the city was visited by the leaders of the G8 and many EU and CIS states), as well as allocated financial resources, if Putin did not consider himself as a Petersburger. About the jubilee celebration events, see: M. Olkina. "Petersburg will try on the frockcoat of the capital city" http://www.kommersant.ru/doc/379672; A. Sobolev. St Petersburg started rejoicing its 300th anniversary, http://www.kommersant.ru/doc/383712

[176]Officially, around one and a half billion dollars have been spent on celebration of the anniversary. M. Saydukova. "'We have not revealed any frauds. There was only improper use', Beskhmelnitsin, an audit expert, commented on the JV report on the preparation of St Petersburg's 300th anniversary", http://www.compromat.ru/page_12970.xтм

[177]When listing ten key distinctions of Petersburg, Lurie said, "There is no place in the world where it would be so much preserved neo-classical, eclectic, modern, retrospective architecture. Young Petersburg, in this sense, is the biggest old city in Europe [...] St Petersburg features about fifteen thousand almost perfectly preserved residential stone houses of the pre-revolutionary city." (2014: 32).

[178]Media outlets actively discussed the problems associated with a delay in restoration projects, corruption, inefficient use of resources, etc. See, for example: A. Nevskaya, L. Yakhnin. Governor Yakovlev is billed for the wasted money, http://www.kommersant.ru/doc/374297; Not ready for the anniversary, http://www.kommersant.ru/doc/567824; I. Bulavinov. The jubilee resignation, http://www.kommersant.ru/doc/384082

majority of citizens."[179] However, old buildings continued to deteriorate even on Nevsky Avenue – the main street of historical St Petersburg.[180]

Integrity of the unique historical center raises constant concern and is the crux of the mobilization of civic activists, architects, urbanists, local historians and simply *non-indifferent Petersburgers*. St Petersburg's intellectual community is extremely large, and this fact contributes to the authority and maturity of urban movements. A symbolic event, which led to the formation of civic protest movements, was an attempt to create the Gazprom City Business Quarter with the Okhta Center, a dominant 400-meter-high skyscraper. This project has aroused fierce controversy and protests. "'It is painful for everybody who cares about historical St Petersburg recognized as an outstanding monument of world heritage' – architect Vladimir Churakov told in the midst of discussions – to imagine a materialization of the Okhta tower with its enormous height."[181]

Civic activists and organizations held numerous public debates, and media outlets were filled with publications by outraged intellectuals. Notable events of confrontation against the government leaders who conceived this project were rallies called "Marches in support of St Petersburg". The organizers of the marches used social networks to mobilize the largest possible number of *concerned* citizens. Protest marches against construction of the Okhta Center became a platform for discussing a wide range of topical issues. "'This is our chance to prevent the demolition of old buildings,' – the organizers of the fourth march wrote in their address – cutting down gardens and parks and construction of ugly glasscrete monsters tearing the fragile fabric of the historic city. This is our chance to save Petersburg from the Okhta Center skyscraper, and the whole Russia from disgrace for destruction of a World Heritage object." The struggle lasted for several years, and various opposition parties and movements actively participated in it. Ultimately, Petersburgers have managed to defend their position, and 'Gazoscraper' (an

[179]T.Voltskaya. Who will not pass 'a session' of UNESCO? http://www.svoboda.org/content/article/24625972.html

[180]Preservation of architectural monuments is not only the problem of the old city center, but also its regional accompaniment – numerous architectural historical monuments scattered throughout the Leningrad region. Petersburg has been inscribed in this broad space. After the celebration of the 300th anniversary, the situation with the city center has improved, but the monuments outside it quickly deteriorate. Pavel Nikonov, a member of the Presidium of the All-Russian Society for the Protection of Monuments, very emotionally assessed the lack of attention to architectural monuments scattered throughout the region, "We live not like cavemen and not even like occupants, but like wild beasts." See: Ruined Petersburg, http://karpovka.net/net/; Voltskaya T. To save history of St Petersburg, http://www.svoboda.org/content/article/26645139.html

[181]B. Churakov. The Okhta Center tower and historical St Petersburg // Cultural-historical anthology "Fontanka", #7, 2010, p. 84-93, p. 84.

ironic designation of the Okhta Center) has never been built.[182] This inspiring success of this urban movement, among other things, indicates that despite the massive post-Soviet emigration, the community of Petersburgers remains extremely numerous, and has significant influence and mobilization resources. The same cannot be said, for example, about the community of Bakuvians, who massively fled the city in the late 1980s-1990s.

It makes no sense to use figures in an attempt to determine the extent to which the mass immigration of Petersburgers, Odessites and Bakuvians contributed to changes in the cities. Yet, statistics certainly refer to the hundreds of thousands of people who fled their hometowns and the even greater number of migrants who moved to the post-Soviet St Petersburg, Odessa and Baku.[183] Statistical arguments, interpreting population numbers, hinge on the fact that by no means do all immigrants possess urban habitus and necessary social capital. Some of the post-Soviet migrants could join the ranks of *new* Petersburgers, Odessites and Bakuvians, or in some cases, they were integrated into the network of *native* inhabitants after moving to the city. In other words, figures cast more doubts than offer answers concerning the impact of immigration on urban development.

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[182]See: T. Voltskaya. Protection of Petersburg, last chance, http://www.svoboda.org/content/article/2185339.html; Y. Polyakovskaya, T. Voltskaya. There will be no place for the Okhta Center in St Petersburg, http://www.svoboda.org/content/article/2255129.html.

[183]Some official statistics are provided below. In 1990, the population of St Petersburg numbered 5 million people. Prior to the early 2000s, this figure was steadily declining until it reached 4 mill. 662 thousand people in 2004. In the following years, it was steadily growing, and by 2016, 5 mill. 225 thousand people permanently lived in the city. The growth was caused by migration, mainly from different regions of Russia and ex-Soviet republics, and not by high birth rate. See: UISIS. Official statistics, https://www.fedstat.ru/indicator/31557.do; The territorial body of the Federal State Statistics Service for the city of St Petersburg and Leningrad region, http://petrostat.gks.ru/wps/wcm/connect/rosstat_ts/petrostat/ru/statistics/ Sant_Petersburg/population/

Odessa reached its population peak in 1989 at 1 mill. 115 thousand people. In the following years, the number was steadily declining and reached 1 million people by 2007. In 2016, the population of Odessa numbered slightly more than 1 mil. people. Similar to St Petersburg, the number of residents remained unchanged only due to migration. See: Chysel"nist" naselennya (za ocinkoyu) na 1 chervnya 2016 roku ta serednya chysel"nist" u sichni–travni 2016 roku, http://od.ukrstat.gov.ua/arh/demogr/demogr1_06_2016.htm; Ukraine, cities and towns, http://pop-stat.mashke.org/ukraine-cities.htm

In 1990, the population of Baku numbered 1 779 thousand people. By 2000, this figure was almost unchanged after reaching 1 796 thousand people. By the beginning of 2016, the city's population was estimated at 2 225 thousand people. Despite the fact that the birth rate is higher than in St Petersburg and Odessa, the growth is also directly linked to migration. See: V.G. Panov V.G., Editor-in-Chief, the Yearbook of the Great Soviet Encyclopedia, 1990, Moscow: "The Soviet Encyclopedia" p. 99; The Statistical yearbook of Azerbaijan, Baku, 2000, p. 54; Population by sex, town and regions, urban settlements at the beginning of the 2016, http://www.stat.gov.az/source/demoqraphy/ap/indexen.php.

Official statistics are very doubtful for a variety of reasons. For example, illegal immigrants are not counted, only residents with permanent registration are considered. Additionally, for decades many Petersburgers, Odessites and Bakuvians, who fled their hometowns in the 1990s, remained the owners of apartments, retained citizenship, residence registration, received pensions and so on. The actual resident population may, in some cases, diverge from the official data. For instance, Baku's population is estimated at 4 million people.

It is more important to focus on the experience of change perceived by Petersburgers, Odessites and Bakuvians themselves, and their attempts to explain causes and effects of the changes in the rhythm and atmosphere of daily urban life. It makes sense to start with Baku, which is most affected by migration. In an interview to Azerbaijani media outlets, screenwriter and director Rustam Ibrahimbeyov, one of the most eminent Bakuvians living mainly in Moscow for many years, has attempted to describe the changes,

> "The normal rhythm of urban life has been disrupted [in Baku]. This is like a demographic catastrophe. Just imagine a city where one and a half million people lived. Half of them, including Azerbaijanis, have left for some reasons. And two million people, who were not ready for urban life, have come in their place. Whether it is for the better or for the worse, it is not ours to decide. But the fact that Baku is another city does not cause any doubt. There are completely different people."[184]

For *Ibrahimbeyov, a native Bakuvian*, as for many other members of the community, these changes can be regarded as *a catastrophe*. There was a deep gap in chronotop that affected the process of reproduction of urban habitus and social capital in the new generations. In terms of the new *space* and *time*, in a situation of large-scale reconstruction of the usual architectural landscape, conflicts, ongoing nationalization of the country and its capital, *genuine Bakuvians* became *an endangered type* in their native city. They have suddenly become an absolute minority and no longer determine the rhythm and atmosphere of the daily life of the city, which they considered to be theirs. Such feelings of *catastrophic* changes in urban chronotop are widespread among *native Bakuvians*:

> *"For me, Baku is not my city anymore. This is Dubai, Cairo, anything but not my city. Yes, it is beautiful but not mine. There are no the streets along which I used to walk. Those two-storey houses, mansions.... they are no longer there"* (Matanet, woman, 67 years old, Berlin, 2007).

Habitual, everyday memory space scarcely exists anymore. It is often impossible for people to stroll through the streets where their *best* years of childhood, adolescence,

[184]Rustam Ibrahimbeyov: "In Azerbaijan, the main mechanism, without which a nation cannot live, has been violated. Every nation exists due to its elite", http://www.day.az/news/culture/135018.html

and, for some, adult life were spent. Many streets, squares, cafes and restaurants either no longer exist, or have undergone such a dramatic reconstruction that they have lost their connection with the city of the 1950-1980s. However, new Baku does not necessarily arouse the impulse of total rejection. Often, Bakuvians visiting the city as tourists also see a lot of positives in the reconstruction of the old center.

Whether they like new Baku or not, the key is that they appreciate, or at least understand, it is *another city*. Their Baku, a city where they were born and grew up, went to school and entered universities, ran around yards and streets, and fell in love is in the past. It no longer exists.

> *"The first time* [after the emigration] *I went to Baku in* [19]*97 and I felt bad. It was not the same city! Everything has changed. People hardly spoke Russian. But now I see that those who did not use to speak Russian try to speak Russian. They have become more noble, somehow. It seems that the environment had an effect on them, and the city began to revive"* (Yuliya, woman, 54 years old, Berlin, April 2014).

The altered perception of time, in contrast to memory, is observed most clearly by Bakuvian emigrants. Rare (particularly in the 1990s) visits to their native city enable them to feel the extent and depth of the gap in chronotop more distinctly. The changed time – these *irretrievably gone years* – is most clearly seen through changes in the population composition. Meanwhile, immigrated *genuine Bakuvians* perceive that the time when the *old* community determined itself and its uniqueness has quit the city as well. The city has not ceased to exist. It has even been enlarged, become much noisier and acquired a new gloss. This is not the city of Ibrahimbeyov's generation or their children anymore. *The genuine Bakuvians* are lost in the crowds of new residents, emotionally disconnected to Baku of the 1950-1980s.

> "*The city has changed a lot. It is very difficult to catch some old motives, especially human-related ones.* [...] *If you walk on Torgovaya* [the key street of the main promenade] *during the week and meet someone you know, it will be a great happiness.* [...] *People have changed. They visit each other less often, receive guests less often and interact with each other less often"* (Samir, man, 61 years old).[185]

[185]S. Huseynova. Field Notes. Baku, May 2009.

Not only those who left, but also those who remained, were forced to change the rhythm of their everyday lives. A keen understanding of the speed and depth of the changes observed by a Bakuvian-tourist, as well as the everyday experience of life in *new* Baku for those who have not left, shifts focus from the present to the past imaginary. Bakuvian community is maintained, at least in part, due to the actual, resilient memory of postwar Soviet Baku. The active exchange of recollections of *the golden age* promotes construction of new narratives, as well as maintenance of the myth of a unique and unanimous urban Bakuvian community. Transnationalization of the community maintains the actuality of the past in the present through new rituals, narratives, and dynamic exchange of memories– through participation in activities of various urban clubs, as well as interaction on online discussion forums and social networks. While these clubs and virtual spaces are spreading, reunited Bakuvians still constitute the majority.[186]

Despite the fact that reconstruction of the city center and emigration in Odessa are less extensive, a widespread feeling of the deep gap in urban chronotop can also be observed among Odessites. The rhythm and atmosphere of everyday life in Odessa also underwent a dramatic change in the 1990s.

> "In April of 1996, only three and a half years passed since I left Odessa [...] Frankly, I was bewildered by changes that occurred in such a short time [...] The first thing that caught my eye was a completely different public in the streets. As if it was not Odessa, but some other city. Completely different intonations– speech is not just loud but pretty rude with open use of obscene vocabulary, which sounds as natural as breathing. [...] Everything looked different everywhere. Atmosphere and people are unusually unfamiliar and unfriendly. There are no jokes, no smiles. I will repeat myself and say that it is not Odessa. [...] We were walking home along Pushkin Street, along our beautiful Pushkin Street. There are the same wonderful slabs under our feet, the same magnificent sycamores above our heads and all favourite old buildings of the beloved city. But where are those people, those unfamiliar but dear passerbys, where are those friendly faces?" [187]

[186]The most popular Internet site uniting Bakuvians is Baku Pages - International Community of Baku people, http://www.bakupages.com/; and its most popular Russian-language version - http://www.baku.ru/ There are also numerous groups of Bakuvians in Facebook and Telegram.

[187]Z.Ivnitskaya. A Huge Distance. Essay // "Слово\Word" Magazine,№ 60, 2008, http://magazines.russ.ru/slovo/2008/60/iv40.html

In the 1990s, as in 2016, the architectural landscape of historical Odessa is being preserved better than in Baku, but changes are still very noticeable. They are perceived more painfully because the intellectual community constructing and reproducing the myths and narratives about *brilliant Odessa* and *golden times* for Odessites is much more numerous than in Baku. An Odessa native typically knows the history of his/her city better and cherishes it more than *the average* resident of Baku, for whom personal memories are much more important. The urban myth assures that Odessa has been the city of Odessites since its founding, whereas Baku was the city of Bakuvians for a limited period of time (1950-1980s). Yet, Odessites are also very sensitive about the gap in urban chronotop. Odessa of the 1950-1980s, not unlike Baku, was also completely different from its present, and full of large swaths of Odessites who have since (the collapse of the Soviet Union) left. The rhythm of life, norms of behaviour, clothing, public displays of emotions, language, or, in other words, the urban habitus of most people living in Odessa was also different at this time.

> *The most important thing is that these forty per cent* [of Odessites] *have left, but the volume of people has remained. The same million.* [...] *Well, who could* [come]*? So, rural people come first. Because they enter the institutions, nobody wants to go back. This is a natural process* (Aleksey, man, 65 years old, Odessa, September 2012).

> "*Zhvanetskiy very well told in this regard that Odessa has left and today […] it is thinly dispersed around the globe.* [...] *But, of course, a holy place is never empty. The emigrated Odessites, who supported this wonderful legend about the city, were replaced by people who came from the suburbs, from some other places. Therefore, Odessa, of course, is already not the same city that it used to be. But it does not mean that Odessa is perishing. In no case. Because Odessa always gave rise to a huge amount of talents.* [...] *Yes, Odessa is changing, but Odessa lives"* (Mikhail, man, 57 years old, Odessa, September 2012).

Odessites believe in the ability of their city to cope with the changes that have befallen it more than Bakuvians. They are confident in *genius loci* of their native city. *Odessiteness* and the Odessan myth have a powerful foundation, constructed from a large number of different and, among them, extremely influential narratives (scientific, publicistic and literary). Odessa's discourse remains competitive and influential despite ongoing conflicts and the gradual process of nationalization (Ukrainization) of the city.

But far more confidence in the future of the city and community can be seen in St Petersburg among Leningraders / Petersburgers. This city is most accustomed to *digesting* the flow of migrants.

> "By the mid-1980s, the city's population along with suburbs subordinated to the City Council was about 4.9 million people [...] The rapid population growth was not the result of a high birth rate. Less than half of citizens have been living in Leningrad since their birth. Most were migrants ('non-residents')" (Ansberg&Margolis 2009: 6-7)

In the 1950-1980s, there was also a constant outflow of native Petersburgers, Odessites and Bakuvians leaving for other cities of the USSR. People who lived in Petersburg were primarily moving to Moscow. However, non-stop as it was, emigration from these cities was not massive during the Soviet years. Petersburgers (as well as residents of Odessa and Baku), who possessed urban habitus and social capital, dominated in (re) producing the community – in the old centers. Both *non-residents* and relocated rural people remained on the periphery of city life, if they had no luck integrating into the networks of *native* inhabitants. In St Petersburg, the rhythm of life, space and time, though it did not change as quickly and deeply, still led to a gap in urban chronotope.

> "*Of course, we were proud of being Leningraders.* [...] *And, of course, the people in the city were different.* [...] *People were gradually changing. Today, nobody is surprised at seeing people throwing trash out the window.* [...] *Previously, it was hard to believe. Bottles are thrown out the window. That is inurbanity is thriving today.* [...] *All parks have been littered. It is a real nightmare! Help!* [...] *Previously, if somebody asked the time or the way, you thanked him/her. That is not the situation here* [...] *Arrogance, rudeness, people are strangers to each other; there is no kindness [...] The village has moved to our city* [...] *Leningrad, St Petersburg was considered a cultural center."* (Alla, woman, 64 years old, St Petersburg, January 2014)

Changes were gradually accumulated. In the post-war years, the cities and their populations grew rapidly. But the old centers, as spaces of (re) production of urban habitus and social capital, not only remained unchanged, but also increased substantially after absorbing the pre-revolutionary outskirts. New (*Soviet*) Leningrad, Odessa and Baku

began on the border of the old centers. The rhythm of the everyday life of the *native* residents remained relatively stable during several post-war decades. *Genuine* Leningraders /Petersburgers, Odessites and Bakuvians, who dominated in the old centers, continued to exert influence in the Soviet dormitory suburbs by *digesting* migrants who entered their city.

In the post-Soviet years, the situation has significantly changed. Citizens possessing the required habitus and social capital have become a minority in all three cities, albeit to varying degrees. Meanwhile, the population – not only of the cities generally, but also historical centers in particular (spaces of preferential reproduction of urban habitus, social capital, discourses, myths and narratives) – was also growing. New buildings accommodate more and more families, and as a result, prospects for reproducing intimate urban communities seem increasingly nebulous. At the same time, transnationalization allows Leningraders / Petersburgers, Odessites and Bakuvians to construct new networks and groups of citizens, which are convenient spaces for saving memories. These communities relive their past years, perhaps, decades. The urban habitus of new Petersburgers, Odessites and, in particular, Bakuvians will be differ significantly from those of the generations of the 1950-1980s.

Sociocultural context of constructing urban communities

Any attempt to understand sociocultural context, within which modern urban communities of Petersburgers, Odessites and Bakuvians were constructed, must ask: what was special about these cities? In other words, what resources did members of these communities have for creating powerful discourses, narratives and myths of the exceptionalism of St Petersburg, Odessa and Baku? In this chapter, I focused on the specifics of place and time, as well as on population composition; on a certain similarity of processes and discourses, as well as on their differences.

All three cities can be called imperial (Russian and then Soviet). Their histories and specifics of urban discourses have been determined by the process of modernization / Europeanization of the rapidly growing cities. The conferred status of truly European centers, which were located in essentially non-European space, assured– perhaps doomed, these cities to a special history. For a long time, Petersburgers, Odessites and Bakuvians considered themselves as *Europeans* living in *the non-European environment.*

Discursive *Europeanness* of their position and status allowed repeated reconstruction and maintenance of the boundaries of communities, as well as assertion of their uniqueness. That is not to say that such ideas had completely lost their relevance by 2016. St Petersburg is still the only Russian city whose *Europeanness* raises no doubts. Founded by the decree of the most famous Russian Empress in the *wild* and *desolate* Novorossiya, Odessa is still "perceived as a piece of Europe brought to the utmost point of the earth by unknown forces" (Karakina 2009: 14). Baku is still a European city in its pre-revolutionary parts.

The history of Petersburgers and Odessites has been in construction since the foundation of these cities (1703 and 1794). The history of Bakuvians started with the first oil boom (1870). It is not a matter of who Petersburgers, Odessites and Bakuvians *really* were in the 18th or 19th to early 20th centuries. Rather, how members of the modern urban communities understand and interpret the events of those times.

Being imperial cities, St Petersburg, Odessa and Baku have always been notable for multiethnic and multiconfessional composition of the population. The pre-revolutionary years saw the creation of distinct socio-cultural and architectural landscapes, urban discourses, myths and narratives, which pass through all new reconstructions and interpretations. In all three cities, these distinct yet enduring formations serve as a basis for the ongoing assertion of their uniqueness and that of their communities of inhabitants. It became habit to consider themselves dissimilar to all others, based on a legacy of centuries, and to take great pride in this uniqueness. This habit has been deeply engrained by the old centers and their discourses of exceptionalism.

In the post-Soviet years, all three cities have suffered *loss*. Petersburgers, Odessites and Bakuvians were forced to witness the destruction of numerous architectural monuments, as well as the influx of previously unknown lifestyles and new urbanisms into the holiest of holy sites – the historical city centers. Civic activists had to learn the methods of public protest against the demolition of old buildings and construction of new ones that do not fit in the landscape of the historical centers. To publicly recognize or criticize new trends in the politics of memory. *To mourn* irretrievably lost places of daily meetings and interactions within *their circle.*

The post-Soviet years were not only a time of losses in memoirs and evaluations of urban community members. Often, one hears that a lot of things have changed for the better, which may refer to financial well-being, opportunities to travel and so forth. However, a circle of everyday contacts (relatives, friends, neighbours) and the rhythm of life, which were familiar from childhood, have been left in the past. It does not matter

whether Petersburgers, Odessites or Bakuvians consider their current life to be better or worse, but all of them realize that it has changed drastically. Voices of those recalling irretrievable losses sound louder than cheerful sentences of those who accept and welcome changes. The old centers need to be carefully preserved rather than radically reconstructed. It is hard, or even impossible, to replace the familiar circle of everyday contacts between neighbours, colleagues, friends being formed from early childhood, the possession of a special urban habitus and social capital, which, using Jacobs Jane's metaphor, can be also called *the language of the sidewalks* [188], during the lifetime of a generation or two. Very few people manage to form new habitus and to acquire new social capital.

Is it possible to bring back that time when genuine Odessites, Bakuvians and Petersburgers prevailed in the cities? The obvious answer can only be negative. Nostalgia for a time and place does not imply a desire to return to their native cities. Most of the emigrants do not even think about returning, as they would have to return to *new cities*. Instead of returning, Leningraders / Petersburgers, Odessites and Bakuvians prefer to create emigrant urban clubs and to construct transnational virtual friendship and communication networks. These clubs and networks preserve the memory of *the golden time* of life in their native cities. Myths and discourse of their uniqueness are being maintained and (re) constructed. Local urban symbols take on a new meaning and relevance.

[188] Jacobs touches on a somewhat different phenomenon and a very different city – Chicago. Her work does not tell about a "deep friendship" or neighbourly relations, but about a mutual voluntary desire occurring in everyday urban life to "keep an eye on the sidewalk", i.e. to keep order on 'their' street. She makes an example of small businesses – people owning a variety of shops, hairdressing salons, etc. (Jacobs 1961: 59-61). As for lifestyles in Soviet Petersburg, Odessa and Baku in the 1950-1980s, it is more apt to discuss friendly and neighbourly relations, rather than small businesses. A street, and also courtyards in case of Odessa and Baku, became a place of intensive interaction and regular meetings in a situation where snack bars, cafes, barber shops and restaurants were rare (there were few of them). There was "a sidewalk language" being developed on the streets and in the courtyards, which enabled St Petersburgers, Odessites and Bakuvians to quickly recognize "their people" and identify "others". However, it is important not to forget about the internal diversity of each urban community, which was drastically manifested in the groups conflicts between children and teenagers, residents of different streets, schools, urban areas.

CHAPTER III

PETERSBURGERS, ODESSITES, BAKUVIANS: MYTHS, DISCOURSES AND SYMBOLS OF URBAN COMMUNITIES

Eccentric cities-myths

Dmitri Likhachev, a famous Petersburger and specialist on ancient Russian literature, who made a significant contribution to the discursive construct of a unique "Russian soul", has also partaken in the development of the myth of St Petersburg. One of his journalistic essays featured "the desire of Russians to found their capitals as close as possible to the borders of their state." According to him, this is exactly what Peter the Great did when he built "a new capital on the country's most dangerous borders – on the shores of the Baltic Sea – against the backdrop of the unfinished war with the Swedes". According to Likhachev, by this "most radical" step, Peter only maintained "the old tradition" (Likhachev 2006: 65).

Another famous Petersburger and literary critic Yuri Lotman, in turn, believed that St Petersburg was an example of an "eccentric city". Such centers are located "on the edge" of a cultural space: on the seashore, at the mouth of the river. "This city was founded in spite of Nature," Lotman continues, "and it is struggling with it, which enables a double interpreting the city: as a triumph of mind over the elements, on the one hand, and a perversion of the natural order, on the other hand" (Lotman 2002: 209).[189] This juxtaposition of culture with physical space on the borderland of the great empire is an eccentricity is that is not only applicable to St Petersburg mythology, but also the mythologies of Odessa and Baku.

Though to varying degrees, the myth in all three cases is built around the image of the "wonder city" emerged on a remote borderland, in a deserted, sparsely populated, unattractive place, or even in a place which is unfit for a comfortable life. The contrast between a situation "before" and a situation "after" the construction of the city allows

[189]About the history of *Ingrian land* in the Swedish period before the foundation of St Petersburg see: (Hoffmann 2003: 37-42).

emphasis on the uniqueness and grandeur of artificially created urban landscapes. In the context of urban myths, Petersburg, Odessa and even ancient Baku appeared as if by magic, almost immediately after becoming a significant urban center. Moreover, their very creation led to a revision of the center-periphery opposition. Located on the imperial outskirts, these cities quickly turned into cultural, industrial, financial and administrative centers.

As far back as 1720, modern outlines of a fascinating city were clearly visible in the picturesque buildings of the new imperial capital, stretching along the banks of the Neva. According to an unknown Polish author, a representative of the embassy who visited St Petersburg in the same year, "As I heard, there were once fifteen cabins inhabited by Swedish fishermen in this place. [...] Now the city is large, and everyone builds it up; and if the tsar lives for some years, he will make the city huge." [190]

The bold idea and strong will of Peter the Great, under whose reign "Petersburg was growing like a bogatyr [strongman] and was enriched with new buildings day after day"[191], led to foundation of a city on the shores of the cold Neva within the shortest possible time frame. In 1725, two decades after the new capital was founded, the emperor passed away and left "many projects at their beginning." But through efforts of some of his successors, especially of Catherine II, "the city was growing and inching towards its possible perfection. Such a sudden return and growth of the city," wrote German intellectual Johann Georgi, who moved to St Petersburg for service in the second half of the 18th century, "merits everyone's attention and causes surprise" (1794: 25). Much later, in 2000, Moisey Kagan, a famous Petersburg cultural expert, continues this tradition by developing the discourse of the "unprecedented" capital transfer "not to some other city with a glorious past" but rather, building its foundation "practically from nothing". Kagan finds a bright metaphor to support this thesis in the work of the major Russian national poet: "according to Pushkin's known description, Peter's city grew out of the darkness of forests and marshlands" (2006: 49-50).

For many generations of Russian intellectuals, it was impossible to imagine the history of the Russian Empire, which was born simultaneously with its capital, without a quickly "grownup" city on the Neva. This mythology was summarized in the early-twentieth-century by popular Russian literary and political magazine, *Niva*:

[190]As for the Swedish fishermen, the author of the notes is wrong, but he conveys the scale of construction very accurately. See: (Anisimov 2003: 147-150, Bespyatikh 1991: 24, 139).
[191]That is the way the researcher saw the first decades of life in the city, from the perspective of its 200th anniversary (Fedotov 1903: 19).

> "What actually is Petersburg for our homeland? The entire modern history of our state is associated with St Petersburg. As once it was in Moscow, later all events that influenced the course of Russian life occurred in Petersburg. All beneficent novelties and reforms arose here and only resonated in the rest of Russia. The city saw the growth and evolution of Russian science, formation and development of Russian literature, emergence of Russian social life. All the famous Russian people of the last two centuries lived and worked primarily in St Petersburg. [...] Both then and, especially, now, Petersburg is an inexhaustible treasury of a Russian thought, work and genius." [192]

In the 18th century, another "unprecedented" event – the foundation of Odessa – took place in the Russian Empire. In the 19th century, *Southern Palmyra* became one of the most important symbols of the successful implementation of the Russian Empire's modernization mission in the East. A *Niva* issue on Odessa, describes:

> "As the Turks were pushed back from the shores of the Black Sea, the population benighted under the yoke of the Quran, confessors started to gradually fall under the influence of European culture. Since the time of the Treaty of Kuchuk Kainarji, Russia received the shores of the Black Sea from Kerch to Ochakov, and under the treaty of Yassa, the land of Ochakov was annexed to Russia. All this huge territory consists of treeless, grassy steppes cut through by many large and small rivers and covered with graves and burial mounds. It took a great deal of efforts and troubles to populate this wild land."

But only two decades after its founding, "Odessa went forward rapidly [...] finally, it became the main trade and scientific artery of Novorossiysk region".[193]

The Odessa myth in the 19th century, as well as the St Petersburg and Baku myths, was a vivid illustration of the expansionist imperial ideology. According to its logic, by occupying the northern Black Sea coast, Russian rulers returned one of Europe's oldest centers – settled by enlightened ancient Greeks in time immemorial and later lost, seemingly forever – to the bosom of imaginary Europe. Before being conquered, this territory, according to Nikolai Nadezhdin, a scientist and professor at Moscow University,

[192]Bicentenary of St Petersburg. (1703-1903). // Niva. The illustrated magazine of literature, politics and modern life, No. 19, 1903, p. 362-363.
[193]Odessa // Niva. The illustrated magazine of literature, politics and modern life, 1874, № 41, p. 651.

writing in the mid-nineteenth-century, was located not only beyond the Russian Empire but also "outside of Europe – beyond any public amenities, all benefits of a peaceful diligence and enlightened citizenship that are inherent in Europe! [...] It was a desolate, Asian steppe overgrown with a thorny bristle of feather grass". (Nadezhdin 1839: 1-4).

Many centuries of a "dead desert" and "cemetery emptiness" separated ancient Greeks and their "rich, gorgeous colonies", whose names have not survived, from the Russian Empire's coming to the shores of the Black Sea. But "this brigandish nest" [194] was returned to the "humming life". And its most "wild and inhospitable shore", where there was only "a miserable Turkish prison bearing the inglorious, barbaric name of Hajibey", hosted "the capital of New Russia" (Ibid.).

According to one of the first historians of the city, it was "only owing to the proximity of the Black Sea, the war of 1788-1791 and, finally, the phenomenon of Odessa that the unknown Ochakovo region revived and reached the state of blossoming it is in." By the end of the reign of Catherine's grandson, Emperor Alexander I (1801-1825), the city was considered to be "the center of almost the whole of Southern Russia."[195] Founded on the site of small Hajibey, an "unattractive and dangerous place" with "a miserable Tatar population", Odessa "rose like a mushroom after a heavy rain" according to one Russian historian, while another viewed it as a city that "had no infancy".[196] In the context of the Odessa myth, rapid growth becomes a key proof not only of the unique success of development but also of a radical difference from all other cities of the huge empire. "In contrast to hundreds and thousands of cities scattered over the face of Russian land and hardly dragging out their existence in the vast majority of cases, Odessa was developing and grew with amazing, almost American rapidity" (Nadler 1893: 5).

Historians are joined by journalists and prominent media figures who made significant contributions to the development of the city myth, glorifying "Odessa which became one of the best and richest cities in Russia in a short time. It is hardly possible to find in the whole history of Russia an example of such incredible development, which fell to the share of Odessa".[197] The event, which was "miraculous" even for contemporaries – the emergence of a large Russian port city on the Black Sea coast belonged to Ottomans until recently – still remains an important element of the discourse

[194]In Nadezhdin's view, "emptiness" is not the complete absence of people but the absence of "enlightened" people, whom he attributed to European culture.
[195]See: (Skalkowski 1837: 2, 234).
[196]See: (Fedorov 1894: 6; Herlihy, Ibid.: 9).
[197]The Centenary of Odessa // Historical Bulletin. Historical and literary magazine. Volume 18, 1889, p. 454.

of the uniqueness of Odessa. "Our city is a true child of Europe. It arose [...] on the site of a tiny village of Hajibey to very soon become a world-known city whose very existence justifies the title of 'the Southern Beauty', the 'Pearl of the Black Sea', 'Black Sea Babylon', 'South Capital', 'The Best City on Earth'".[198]

The plot of the Baku myth, which is similar to the Petersburg and Odessa ones in many motifs, is analogous to the famous fairy tale about the miraculous transformation of an "ugly duckling" (the godforsaken little and dusty Asian town) into a "beautiful swan". Baku, the capital of oil magnates, invested heavily in its beautification and development. An author of one of the first articles published in the well-known Petersburg (capital) magazines acquaints us with Baku in the 1860s, which was "old in terms of time of its foundation but very young in terms of its revival" [199], which began within five to six years after the city became the center of the homonymous province. The future of the city, which until recently had been in fact an "aul" (i.e. Caucasian or Central Asian mountain village) and almost unknown to the reading public, appears in the most glowing colors. "Indeed, we should be surprised at the speed with which Baku develops and tries to occupy – both in outward appearance and internal content – a priority position in the Eastern Caucasus." At this pace of construction, "it will not take Baku ten years to become far better and more beautiful than any city in central Russia." [200]

The less the land on which they grew was adapted to construction and life of "magnificent" cities, the stronger the magic seemed. This explains the popularity of plots of unattractiveness and emptiness of the places chosen for their construction. In the context of these same plots, the founding fathers are constructed as near heroic: only through the unbending will, personal example, and admirable acts of Peter the Great, Joseph de Ribas and Duke of Richelieu was it possible to transform natural chaos into urban landscape. Thus, founding heroes carved their permanent place in urban myths. Their images (sculptural and portrayal) became symbols of the cities they founded. "In Odessa, Richelieu enjoyed fame of fairy-tale Harun al-Rashid: he walked around a whole

[198]The phrase, taken from an article by a modern Ukrainian journalist, is notable because its author lists markers and epithets, which are familiar to each Odessan and used to emphasize the uniqueness of their city, and also its European character (Gorbatyuk 2010: 5).

[199]Many years later, the same motif ("He is old and eternally young") sounded in a song that gained fame thanks to Muslim Magomayev, the Soviet and Azerbaijani singer who first sang it, – "My City Baku" (composer – P.Bulbul ogli, lyrics by A. Gorokhov). http://www.gl5.ru/m/magomaev-muslim/magomaev-muslim-gorod-moy-baku.html

[200]See: Baku // Niva. The illustrated magazine of literature, politics and modern life, 1874, № 9, p. 140-142. The starting point for the "revival" process was the transfer of the province center from Shamakhi, which was destroyed in an earthquake, to Baku in December 1859. This event coincided with the rapid growth of oil production and refining in the 1860s, which was followed by the oil boom in the 1870s. The key contributing factors to it were a convenient bay and a port. For more details about the pre-revolutionary development of the city, see: (Bretanitsky 1970: 91-117; Ojagova 2003: 14-15; Baberowski 2003: 44-46).

city for three or four days, got acquainted with the needs of citizens, visited workshops, bakeries [...] reconciled and removed family conflicts. Richelieu for Odessa was small Peter the Great" (Fedorov 1894: 27). Comparing Richelieu to the most outstanding Russian ruler, who was capable of the impossible, is the highest compliment Richelieu could ever deserve. In the case of Baku, where there is no myth of its heroic foundation, the eternal selfless devotion of urban oil millionaire philanthropists clearly compensates for any lack of any particular heroic "feats" (Haji Zeynalabdin Tagiyev, Musa Nagiyev, etc.).

The plot of nature as unfriendly to man is most persistently repeated in the St Petersburg myth. The European capital of the huge "Asian" continental empire, the localization and production of high imperial and Russian culture, was built on its vast, cold and damp northern outskirts. "Climate, comfort and convenience were not what Russian Tsar Peter the Great had in mind when he decided to build a new capital in the muddy marshes of the Neva River delta" (Lincoln 2002: 1). The St Petersburg myth still begins with discussing the strange and unsuccessful choice by Peter the Great for the construction of the metropolitan "paradise".[201] "The place where the city emerged is not suitable for life: as a matter of fact, St Petersburg is still the only city of this size built so far in the North. Here there is the haze of white nights; a person feels very unsteady here" (Marchenko 2002: 336-337). In a place like this, the break with tradition expressed in the creation of a new European city untypical for the Moscow kingdom becomes possible.

Eccentricity of the place chosen for a new capital resulted from the extraordinary nature of the goals of its main founder. Petersburg was built as a city that was both "sea port" and "Window to Europe".[202] Peter the Great developed the empire while changing the status of tsarist power. "We were pressed back from the sea; Russian volosts passed to other people," writes the author of a Niva article, interpreting this landmark event after almost two hundred years, "and on the Neva banks, along with the Finnish villages, there emerged Swedish villages that tightly caulked the 'Window to Europe' for us".[203] Always being radical and frantic in his plans and deeds, the first emperor of All Russia founded the city of his dreams on the border with European Sweden and hence, according to

[201]In the 18th century, it was the word "paradiz" (Russian pronunciation of the word "paradise") not the Russian word denoting the same thing that was used to describe the founding tsar's ideas of what Petersburg was to become. The modern language does not use this word.
[202]The bicentenary of St Petersburg. (1703-1903). //Niva. The illustrated magazine of literature, politics and modern life, No. 19, 1903, p. 361.
[203]Ibid., p. 362.

Alexander Pushkin, he "*cut* a window *through* to Europe".[204] By founding St Petersburg, Peter did not simply open a window that was locked for a long time but created a unique space for cultural contact. "And the point at which they [Europe and Russia] have been joined - whether as friend or foe, cultural allies or intellectual antagonists - has always been St Petersburg" (Lincoln, Ibid: 5). The place, where the southern "window to Europe"[205] was cut, was radically different from the misty, marshy Neva banks, overgrown with dense forest.

It is similarly "hard to imagine primordial Odessa in comparison with the present one," suggests Alexander Deribas, a direct descendant of one of the city's most famous founders, who writes:

> "In fact, it was an unattractive, rocky terrain abruptly descending into the sea, without the slightest vegetation (except for three old pear trees remaining from primordial Hajibey), surrounded by a sandy desert from the side of Peresyp and by such a steppe that wolves were caught there from the side of Dalnik. And Odessa was built in this area from crude materials and clay. It was not protected from heat and dust by a single tree." (Deribas 2012: 28)

In the case of *Northern Palmyra*, people faced a thick forest and an excess of water. As for *Southern Palmyra*, on the contrary, urban planners struggled to preserve each planted tree in the first decades after its foundation. Nevertheless,

> "Gardening in the city and its environs was stimulated by the duke himself [Richelieu] who set an example. He especially loved this work; [...] he invested a lot of personal labor and money in his city duke's garden. [...] All the duke's activities quickly yielded fruit, and after several years of his governance, not only

[204]This famous metaphor is attributed to Italian publicist and writer Francesco Algarotti, who "visited St Petersburg in 1739, after which he published the book *Letters from Russia*" (Sindalovsky 2012: 126). "The expression became widely popular after it was used by Alexander Pushkin in his poem 'The Bronze Horseman' in 1833: 'Here we are destined by nature /To cut a window into Europe'" (Isupov, pp. 2015, 175). Algarotti, as a source, is mentioned by Pushkin himself, who also confirmed the authority and special status of Peter's creation– not just the capital city of St Petersburg, but a "truly" European city.

[205]A habitual metaphor describing the status of the city, which could also be called a "window to the East" in the late 19 century. "If Peter the Great cut a window through to Europe in the north by founding St Petersburg, Catherine rendered no less service to Russia when she founded Odessa and thus cut a window through in our south not only to Europe but also to the East." Odessa's Centenary // Historical Bulletin. Historical and literary magazine. Volume 38, 1889, p. 455.

Odessa but the entire Novorossiysk region were unrecognizable. New colonies with large crops and huge flocks of sheep and cattle were settled in the desert".[206]

Such a heightened interest in gardening persisted throughout the 19th – early 20th centuries, until it began to be perceived as a habitual practice, designed not only by personal preferences of city governors who tried to construct an unusual landscape but also foreign influence. Odessa was created by Europeans from scratch in accordance with the strategies developed by the 19th century. In the era of modernization, creation of public park spaces became a mandatory rule for European city planning and development.

Of course, neither St. Petersburg nor Odessa required as much effort and resource expenditure for gardening as Baku. According to Hasan bey Zardabi, an educator and the creator of the first newspaper in the Azerbaijani language, "whatever the case, the Black Sea is a European sea, from where the rays of civilization penetrated faster and greater than those from the Caspian Sea, which itself was in need of light." However, the Caspian coast was where oil was discovered – the basis of Baku's future prosperity. "On the Caspian coast," Zardabi tells, "on loose sand and shell limestone, there was a city that did not know what was going on in the world for hundreds of years, a little-known city." The coastal city owed its existence to the natural bay, which hosted miserable wind-powered schooners arrived from no less poor Persian ports. The soil and climate of this desolate place were so unattractive and inhospitable that it served as a place of exile[207] (Zardabi 1962: 349-351).

A detailed description of Baku before the oil boom was written by future professor of St Petersburg University, Ilya Berezin, who visited the city in the mid-19th century. Unlike Zardabi, Berezin liked the city from an orientalist point of view, though he remarked: "In Baku, there is nothing for public life but a public garden whose only entertainment is a modest seal living in a cage, and there is nowhere to hide from the heat and curious looks" (Berezin 1850: 14). A view of Baku from the bay made a most favorable impression on writer Alexei Pisemsky, who visited it in the late spring of 1856, however,

"The charm of the first impression of Baku completely disappears when you enter it. Those who did not visit Asian cities cannot imagine what Baku streets are:

[206](Yakovlev 1894: 20). See also: (Deribas, ibid.: 33; Herlihy 1986: 32).
[207]In the first decades of St Petersburg's existence, it was perceived as a city where people were forced to move unwillingly, as a place of exile. Alexander Pushkin also lived in Odessa as a disgraced and exiled poet.

> back, dirty corners of our guest houses can only give a vague notion of them; we were walking between walls without windows by two in a row, and the third one would not find a place next to us; we saw only a strip of the sky above us and dung beneath our feet" (Pisemsky 1911: 538).

This is how unpretentious the future oil capital of the empire was seen by contemporaries, when the industrial boom began in the 1870s. As a result, "the revived city of Baku, which had nothing in common with the former inhospitable city, began to grow in leaps and bounds, and life started pulsing through the city" (Zardabi 1962: 351).

Still, the local educator's optimism was not shared by all visitors to the city. Baku, including the Soviet reformations, which should have been mostly praised, caused the first tourists to feel the most conflicting feelings. Memories of the city are mostly attributed to "European" visitors, whose ideas about the "right" city differed significantly from the architectural landscape seen in Baku. The greatest interest and emotions were stirred by visiting the "eastern" (Muslim) part of the city. Seasoned imperial intellectuals who travelled to Baku from Petersburg or Moscow, and had previously visited cities in Western Europe, were very hard to impress with "European" city quarters that grew up due to oil revenues. New and, generally, negative experience was also associated with an unusually dry and hot climate aggravated by pollution caused by oil extraction and processing.

Popular Russian composer Pyotr Tchaikovsky retained fond memories of his visit to Baku in the spring of 1887. He describes:

> "For me, this city, unexpectedly, turned out to be charming in every respect, that is, correctly and beautifully built, clean and at the same time unusually outstanding, since the eastern (namely the Persian) element is so prevalent there that you are definitely somewhere on the other side of the Caspian Sea. The only problem is that there is too little greenery. Eternal drought and stony soil make even the miraculously planned state-maintained Mikhailovsky Garden present a sorry sight of dried trees and completely yellowed lawns. Bathing is magnificent. The next day after the arrival, I went to explore the area where oil is extracted [...]. This is both an impressive and gloomy spectacle" (Tchaikovsky 2004).

The next year, another prominent figure visited Baku – Russian writer Anton Chekhov, on whom the city and its environs made a much more depressing impression. "The road

from Tiflis to Baku is the abomination of desolation, a bald plain covered with sand and created for Persians, tarantulas and phalanges to live in; there is not a single tree, no grass... dreary as hell. Baku and the Caspian Sea are such rotten places that I would not agree to live there even for a million. There are no roofs, there are no trees either, Persian faces are everywhere, fifty-degree heat, a smell of kerosene, the naphtha-soaked mud squelches under one's feet, the drinking water is salt..." (Chekhov 1975: 310-311).

Unlike the climate, the city was undergoing quick changes, but the architectural landscape often caused "European" visitors to feel mixed emotions. Journalist Boris Brandt wrote an interesting essay after visiting Baku, in which he tried to express contradictory feelings that overwhelmed him: "Smoke, soot, mud [...] At a glance, Baku appears as an ordinary large provincial city. [...] However, some differences are immediately noticed [...]. Next to single-story and two-story houses, there are scattered grandiose houses and passages featuring all comfort and luxury of modern architecture".[208]

Maxim Gorky, the future head of the Union of Soviet Writers, who visited Baku twice in the 1890s, retained equally strong negative memories. Oil fields that gave the city a chance for rapid transformation, which were located next to the new city under construction, were impressed in his memory as "a brilliant painted picture of a gloomy hell." And the city referred to as that of the "poor and rich" was described by the major proletarian prose writer as an inhospitable place. For Gorky, it much more resembled, in his words:

> "ruins of a city, pictures of ruined, dead Pompeii, a city, where a black, unusual shaped tower of the ancient fortress [Maiden Tower] stood high amidst gray piles of stones, but where there was not a single spot of greenery, not a single tree, and oil-saturated sand of unpaved streets became rust-colored. The city had no water: for the rich, it was brought in cisterns from hundreds of miles away, while the poor people drank desalinated sea water. The strongest wind blew, bright sunlight illuminated this unusually disconsolate city and dust whirled above it. It seemed that a clutch of houses with flat roofs was dried by the sun and crumbled to dust" (Gorky 1949: 113, 117).

[208]For more details see: B.G. Brandt (1900), From a trip to Baku // Herald of Europe. The magazine of history - politics - literature, Volume 205, Book 9, 281-300. P. 287-289.

Gorky recorded these observations in 1928 during or immediately after his third visit to Baku. Perhaps the harsh criticism of the city in the times of the empire served to emphasize more boldly the achievements of the second year of Soviet rule. In the late 1920s, the writer was already full of the most magnificent impressions. Comfortable conditions for workers were created in the oil fields. "It is hard to recognize Baku, there is not much left of the chaotic mass of disconsolate houses in the 'Tatar' part of the city that looked so much like a pile of ruins after an earthquake. New wide streets were laid, trees grew and greenery enlivened gray stones of buildings; plants on the Seaside Boulevard spread out wide." (Gorky, ibid: 126-127). A significant part of the "chaotic mass", which for some reason was left unnoticed by Gorky during his last visit to Baku, has survived to this day. Entire quarters of the "ruins" were demolished in 2012 – 2017 during the process of transformation of the capital into "New Dubai". However, Baku did not give up hope of preserving the European charm attributed to it.

In all three myths created and supported by citizens of St Petersburg, Odessa and Baku, special importance is given to the "golden periods" in the histories of these cities. The Petersburg myth is the most complex. If we turn to Lotman in an attempt to characterize it, we can say that it contains the *ultimate idealization with opposite signs*. Petersburg is, on the one hand, "paradise": the utopia of "an ideal city of the future, embodiment of Mind." On the other hand, simultaneously, the city on the Neva is the "sinister masquerade of the Antichrist." The instability of marshy soil, on which Peter's city was artificially built, as well as its gloomy climate spark endless speculations about the fragility of its existence, but, at the same time, enable us to believe in the possibility of a victory over the forces of nature. In these two antitheses, pre-revolutionary Petersburg remains the foundation for the myth. The myth of the city created through the efforts of *the great Russian* poets and writers of the 19th - early 20th centuries comes to life on its streets. The Petersburg myth is addressed to that period of the golden past when the city on the Neva was the brilliant capital of the empire. Still, living memory of the Soviet period for Leningraders-Petersburgers of the older and middle generations is little connected with discourse of the uniqueness of the city. Everything that is "great" occurred in the past and remains in the history of the city. The rich legacy of the imperial past makes it possible to preserve the charm of the *great* city, albeit somewhat shabby and tattered.

The Odessa myth, by comparison, looks back at the imperial past to an even greater degree. The *ultimate idealization* of the imperial past is most fully conveyed by a

passage of local historian Alexander Doroshenko, which is the preface to works of his colleague, Rostislav Aleksandrov. Doroshenko writes:

> "Our city is 221 years old. In fact, it is not absolutely true because it was built only during the first hundred-plus years. Then, since the First World War (and then the Revolution, and then the Civil War, and then in the process of creating universal happiness, and then in the period of perestroika, and then...), our city has been mostly vandalized and destroyed. And so, it goes on." (Alexandrov 2015: 11)

In the context of the Odessa myth, there is only one *sign*: imperial history is a story of the true *Pearl by the Sea*, whereas the Baku myth is the most multi-faceted among all three. In it, there is room for the nationalized imperial past and the heyday after 1945, and even the post-Soviet transformation into the new Dubai. In the meantime, the whole architectural heritage since the oil boom – forming the center of the city[209] – was nationalized and, in the context of the myth of the "beautiful sunny city", has a positive connotation. For many *native* Bakuvians, the *golden period* remains the 1950s and early 1980s.

The main motif uniting all three myths is a common metaphor of their dissimilarity to all other cities. Petersburg, Odessa and Baku as large imperial centers, with high administrative and discursive statuses, unique architectural landscapes, and mixed population, were predestined to produce special local urban communities. Since their foundation, these cities have attracted numerous seekers of a better, more interesting and eventful life. The works of imagination of ethnically, religiously and socially diverse newcomers to the banks of the northern Neva and the Baltic coast, the southern Black Sea and the oil-saturated Caspian coast not only made possible the future construction of architectural monuments, but also contributed to the production of urban myths and discourses. Numerous narratives survived their creators and were inherited by future generations of citizens.

Petersburg and Odessa were glorified by numerous philosophers and poets, writers and journalists convinced that the special "spirit" or "aura" of their native cities served as sources of their inspiration. Having achieved wide popularity outside St Petersburg and Odessa, many of them have fully repaid their debt by creating literary images of "genuine" Petersburgers and Odessites, asserted by the artists' authority. Near every resident of these two cities is oriented toward their literary figures, who have been

[209]In this myth asserted in songs of the Azerbaijani singers widely known in the USSR – Rashid Beybutov and Muslim Magomaev, typical bedroom communities remain largely invisible.

long entrenched as canonical, and pretend to be a "genuine" Petersburger or Odessite. In other words, the St Petersburg text, along with the Odessa one, owe their creation to the cities themselves. And at the same time, Petersburg and Odessa owe their uniqueness to the texts through which city myths and images of "genuine" Petersburgers and Odessites were asserted and disseminated. Baku was much less fortunate, in that the city did not produce great writers and poets capable of asserting influential Baku discourse and myth. Sung by famous singers and known to every Bakuvian, songs about their city could not replace the durability of literature, albeit they contributed to myth. As a result, the Bakuvians have much poorer discursive and narrative resources necessary for sustainable reproduction of the urban habitus.

According to Lotman, "As a complex semiotic mechanism and a generator of culture, the city can perform this function only because it is a cauldron of texts and codes differently arranged and heterogeneous, belonging to different languages and different levels" (Lotman 2002: 212). *Eccentric* cities – *generators of culture* and deep cauldrons of *texts and codes* – certainly produce no less "eccentric" urban communities. Discourse about the completely different people created by these cities was simultaneously asserted in constructing myths of the uniqueness of St Petersburg, Odessa and Baku. The styles in which communities of Petersburgers, Odessites and Bakuvians are imagined are reflected in numerous literary works, social and political essays, studies of local historians, songs, films, funny stories and, finally, in the memories of members of the communities. These styles are also tools of community construction, sources of information about their specifics and resources necessary for their reproduction.

Later in this chapter, I will focus on the specificity of styles of imagination.[210] And having understood them, one can try to answer the question of how communities of eccentric cities see themselves and to attempt to reproduce dominant narratives of urban habitus and the specificity of urban discourses. Referring to several sources (in addition to interviews and observations conducted as part of this research) will allow us to approach this question. Discourses on "real/native" residents of Odessa, St Petersburg or Baku find resources not only in the memory of life in their native city, but also in literary images, in collective representations of the main promenades, widely recognized sets of urban symbols (sculptural, architectural, etc.), as well as in representations of significant "other" cities.

[210]According to Benedict Anderson, it is the styles in which communities are imagined that allow us to distinguish them.

A "genuine" Petersburger in literary images and everyday conversations

In Solomon Volkov's dialogues with Joseph Brodsky, they discuss the issue of the poet's relationship with his longtime friend Gennady Shmakov, a ballet critic and translator known in the 1960s-80s. Volkov recollects that Shmakov was an "exotic figure", who had good manners and spoke various languages. In Leningrad intellectual circles, he was both a known ballet expert and rumored homosexual. According to Volkov, "Americans called this kind of people 'a quintessential Petersburger'", all of whom emigrated from Leningrad in the 1970s and reunited in New York, where Volkov was greatly surprised to learn from another Soviet emigrant, sculptor Ernst Neizvestny, that Shmakov was not a Petersburger (that is, he was not born in the city on the Neva). Rather, he was "from the Urals".

Volkov's reaction to this information reveals a lot about both the Petersburg habitus and the principles of inclusion in the urban community. His surprise demonstrates that it would be unthinkable, and perhaps disappointing, for a man to pretend to be an "ideal Petersburger" for a long time, who was not. This status assumes the assimilation of an elite cultural code which is inherent only in a person who was born and raised in the northern capital, and who entered its intellectual environment from the earliest years. Or, at least from a tender age, as in Volkov's case when he moved from Riga to the city on the Neva as a child.[211] Therefore, the very fact of Shmakov's birth and primary socialization (prior to university) in a remote provincial region casts serious doubt on his alleged claims to the status of a "genuine" Petersburger.

However, Shmakov, who came to study in Leningrad from a distant working "periphery",[212] could be very convincing in looking like a quintessential Petersburger. Volkov asks Brodsky a question which I will also try to answer in this section: "In your opinion, how does a person make himself/herself such 'a genuine Petersburger'?" (Volkov 1998: 286). Or, in other words, what are the criteria for inclusion in or exclusion

[211]The city of origin of 'future Petersburger' Volkov is important. Riga, where he lived before moving to Leningrad, was the capital of one of the Baltic republics, consistently associated with the Soviet 'west' in the Soviet era.

[212]'Ural' is the geographical boundary of European Russia. From the perspective of the northern capital, it is a remote industrial working province and perceived by Volkov, to judge by his question, as a place poorly conditioned for the production of bright and stylish intellectuals. The attitude of some residents of Moscow or Leningrad to remote provincial regions has survived to this very day in the grotesque phrase sounded in the popular Soviet comedy film *The Most Charming and Attractive* (1985). The question "are you from the Urals?" stressed the humiliating status of 'a rube'.

from the community? What categories can be used to describe the habitus of a genuine Petersburger?

To start looking for an answer, it is worth reasserting, first, that the residents of St Petersburg, as well as the residents of Odessa and Baku, are urban communities; hence, the styles of their imagination should not radically differ. All three cities are imagined as strictly limited in space and time, and possessing their own original cultural code. The limits of the physical space are quite easy to localize, and most obviously, they lie where administrative boundaries pass. At the same time, the sociocultural space of Petersburg, along with its suburbs, is characterized by an extreme degree of heterogeneity, if it is understood from the perspective of significance for the urban community. As it was already noted in the second chapter, the most important elements for the work of imagination are the historical centers. Imperial factory districts, dormitory suburbs or Soviet-era outskirts often remain spaces which are invisible in the urban discourse. Or, they act as an antithesis making it possible to emphasize the uniqueness of the historical center.

A special niche was occupied by dacha communities where, since the 18th century, the secular and intellectual urban population escaped in the summer months.[213] "The so-called dacha boom began during the period 1830s-1850s, when the middle sectors of the Petersburg population began to rent summer dwellings from local peasants, usually on lands owned by Petersburg aristocrats" (Buckler 2005: 169). For many years, Petersburgers had access to an absolutely unique resource, which is not available in all other urban communities – plenty of out-of-town imperial residences and splendid parks, convenient for visits in the summer months.

Relative to space, the time limits are much vaguer and more difficult to define. For St Petersburgers, the special status of their city is associated with the history of its foundation, as well as with a two-century imperial and capital period. The most important

[213]In one of his early novellas "White Nights" (1848), Fyodor Dostoevsky describes the feeling of being lost and lonely that overtook the central character, "when the whole of Petersburg got up and suddenly went to dachas. [...] it seemed that everything got up and went, everything moved to dachas in entire caravans; it seemed that the whole of Petersburg threatened to become a desert, so at last I felt ashamed, insulted and sad: I had absolutely nowhere to go, and there was no need to go to the dacha. I was ready to leave with every cart, to leave with every respectable-looking gentleman, who hired a cabman; but none of them, absolutely nobody invited me; as if they have forgotten me, as if I was indeed a stranger to them!" (Dostoevsky 1988: 152-153). Of course, rest in the countryside was not an invention of the mid-19th century. But initially, it was available only to members of the imperial family and aristocrats, owners of country palaces and mansions. On the contrary, by the end of the century, a rapid growth of the middle class provoked a real dacha boom. Only in St Petersburg were a number of newspapers published specially for *dachniks* [i.e. summer cottage residents]. Dachas served as summer getaways for people who were very closely connected with the city, representatives of a rapidly growing middle class (Antonov 2004, Buckler 2005: 158-171, Glezerov 2013).

period of time is the long nineteenth century[214], when St Petersburg acquired its architectural neoclassical luster and, along with being bureaucratic and military, turned into a large industrial and cultural center. It was a time when myths and contrasting images of the city on the Neva and its dwellers were filled with different meanings and were overgrown with metaphors in the works of Alexander Pushkin, Nikolai Gogol and Fyodor Dostoyevsky. By the beginning of its tragic decline, St Petersburg myth-making continued in the works of writers and poets of the Silver Age: Andrey Bely, Alexander Blok, Anna Akhmatova, Osip Mandelstam[215] and others. In the same century, "Petersburg music" was created, which, subsequent to the literature, "had a strong impact on European and world culture."[216] The memory of the rich heritage of "St Petersburg culture", which, according to Solomon Volkov, is doomed to destruction[217] and reinterpretation in works of numerous local historians, allows for preserving widespread status (beyond the city) as a cultural capital and reproducing a special urban habitus.

St Petersburg's long 19th century, in the context of the current dominant "retro imperial" discourse, as termed by Elena Hellberg-Hirn, is not only the past but also the actual present.[218] The Leningraders-Petersburgers still consider themselves to be lineal heirs of the brilliant long century of the imperial capital, and see it as the basis for their distinction from residents of all other cities. In this light, the St Petersburg community's temporal boundaries, regarding the limits of its cultural influence, are immeasurably broader and more difficult to define than its physical space. According to Brodsky, St Petersburg's culture is "something immense".[219] The vision of the city on the Neva, as a powerful cultural phenomenon that goes far beyond the borders of one city, was reflected in the name of *the Worldwide Club of Petersburgers*.

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[214]In comparison with the long nineteenth century as defined by Eric Hobsbawm (1789-1914), the same century was longer for St Petersburg. It began in 1762 with Catherine the Great's rise to power and ended with the October Revolution of 1917.

[215]Julie Buckler: "St Petersburg has been comprehensively mapped in terms of the literary mythology created by Pushkin, Gogol, Dostoevsky, Block, Bely, Akhmatova, and Mandelstam, and by scholars who tease out allusions and influences within this select group of authors and texts" (Buckler 2005: 1). (See also: Antsiferov 1991: 176-293; Antsiferov 2009: 244-268, 287-324, 413-446; Toporov 2009; Donnert 2002: 271-278; Hellberg-Hirn 2003: 81-87;).

[216]In 1862, the first conservatory in Russia was opened in St Petersburg. "It was a step of enormous importance. That was the St Petersburg where foundations of the performing and composer schools, which destined to conquer the whole cultural world in the 20th century, were laid. The names of Heifetz, Elman, Tsimbalist, Milstein, Mravinsky, Stravinsky, Prokofiev and Shostakovich speak for themselves." A huge role was played by musicians – laypersons from the 'Mighty Handful', which was "perhaps the most outstanding artistic circle that ever existed in St Petersburg and Russia." Composer Modest Mussorgsky was the most famous of them. And, of course, Pyotr Tchaikovsky – "the true child of St Petersburg, the most imperial city of all imperial cities" (Volkov 91, 108, 109-165), see also: (Krasnova 2013).

[217](Volkov, ibid. 161).

[218]For more details, see: (Hellberg-Hirn 2003: 33-35).

[219](Volkov 1998: 288).

In her fictionalized memoirs, the club's spokeswoman, Tamara Skoblikova-Kudryavtseva, conveys the emotions that overtook her after she was offered to become its member: "I was fascinated by the very name – the *Worldwide Club of Petersburgers*. It comprised many things for me, almost everything: love for this marvelous city, its universality, and, finally, my personal destiny" (2012: 176). The level of 'universality' is determined by the degree of influence of Petersburg's culture created in the long nineteenth century. In the same period of its history, the city efficiently and quickly turned many newcomers into Petersburgers. In the first two centuries of its existence, the *Northern Palmyra* was the principal center of attraction, to where future writers, poets, literary critics, artists, and sculptors[220] flocked, not only from the whole vast empire but also from many European countries. Most of them, who created the city-myth and the corpus of influential narratives, which were dubbed as the "Petersburg text"[221] by Muscovite Vladimir Toporov, were not born in this city, but later moved to the capital at different times.

Many authors constantly addressed the topic of birth in the city, as an important component of cultural acceleration, while attempting to describe the phenomenon of Petersburg and habitus of "genuine Petersburgers". "If I am not mistaken," Volkov tells in his conversation with Brodsky,

> "Blok was the first great Russian poet born in Petersburg. For us, Pushkin is so closely associated with St Petersburg that we forget: he was born in Moscow. And Dostoevsky was born in Moscow. They came to Petersburg to receive education. Or, here is another example from the Soviet era. For me, the poets of the OBERIU[222] group are genuine Petersburgers. And indeed, Harms and Vvedensky were born in Petersburg. But Zabolotsky, for example, was born near Kazan, but

[220]These people created influential urban discourse, but not only people in the arts moved to St Petersburg. According to Yakov Dlugolensky: "St Petersburg has always been an attractive city for the inhabitants of the empire. Peasants brought their sons here to find them an apprenticeship or a job – at numerous St Petersburg's workshops, factories and trade enterprises. Wealthy people sought higher education for their sons. Young people, who had already received education, were eager to move to St Petersburg for a career. And where, besides St Petersburg, could it be done? All the government bodies were here [...]. And rewards were given here more often, and there was a faster way to rank up [...]. Moreover, one should not forget about other benefits. Where, on earth, were there so many theaters in the empire? [...] Only in St Petersburg. Where else were there so many newspapers (14) and magazines (50)? [...]. What about the circus? And boutiques? And balls? And masquerades? And the most recent high-society news? Everything could be found in Petersburg!" (Dlugolensky 2005: 11-12).

[221]Toporov believes that poets and writers who lived and worked in St Petersburg could see "the very essence of the city". "There is no other city," he notes, "that was written about so much and in such a way. The result of the three-hundred-year existence of the city was a huge number of concrete texts about St Petersburg, and, moreover, the formation of some kind of a super important (due to its semantic over-compactness) construct of a general nature – 'Petersburg text' of Russian literature." (Toporov 2009: 25-26).

[222]"The Association of Real Art" (1927-1930).

grew up in Vyatka and Urzhum. Oleinikov is a real Cossack from somewhere in Kuban. However, they both wrote absolutely Petersburg-style poems."[223]

Similar thoughts can be found, for example, in Toporov's works: "Both Pushkin himself and those who followed them[224] along the 'living trail' – Gogol, Lermontov, Dostoevsky, Andrei Bely – were writers who were not born in Petersburg and their leading role was unquestioned for a long time. (Among these great figures, Block was a genuine Petersburger, but for St Petersburg's 'native' status, the fact that someone was born in this city was hardly significant)" (Toporov 2009: 25-26).

These reflections may be easily perceived as contradictory, but one way of understanding the artist's degree of "genuineness" is connected to the intensity of feelings stirred by the city. The uniqueness of place lies precisely in the fact that it can evoke only strong emotions. This city could be loved forever, as it happened with Pushkin ("I love you Peter's great creation"). Or hated, as it happened with Gogol and Dostoevsky ("Petersburg-monster", "rotten, slimy" "the world's most 'deliberate' city"[225]). But it was impossible to remain indifferent to it. The emotional bond (whether positive or negative) was embodied in poetry and prose, painting, sculpture and architecture, and served to create the Petersburg myth.

In the short 20th century, when Petersburg was no longer the capital and poets and writers began to leave, seeking a better life and greater glory, these turbulent emotions gradually calmed down. They were left behind as a common aspect of the myth of the city's brilliant past. Petersburg characters that were used by Pushkin, Gogol and Dostoevsky to craft heroes in their stories have also remained in the same past. The aura of the main center of attraction has quickly dispersed, and with its loss, the rules of inclusion in the urban community have also changed. The necessity of being born in the city started playing a much more significant role in the St Petersburg discourse. From then on, what Pushkin and Dostoevsky could do, individuals like Shmakov was hardly allowed.

Under the new circumstances, rules for inclusion in the community were complicated in order to support a certain enduring solidarity, through adopting the maxim

[223]Brodsky, however, does not agree with Volkov when assessing the "Petersburg genuineness" of poets in Volkov's list (Volkov 1998: 288).
[224]By "them", Toporov refers to Pushkin and the poet Konstantin Batyushkov (1787 - 1855), whom he considers "the first to see something common and bright [...] in the existence of Petersburg [...] leading to the discovery of new meanings that Petersburg is fraught with" (Toporov 2009: 25).
[225](Volkov 1998: 19, 58-61, 86-87).

that once you were born in Petersburg, you will remain a Petersburger forever. At the same time, the influential discourse – within which popular ideas about the community of St Petersburgers and the conditions for its emergence are asserted – remains largely unchanged. Honoring, discursively and authoritatively, the city of the previous century's literary works became a tradition in the early 20th century, founded by enthusiasts and local historians. At the same time, the process of rethinking the significance of the Petersburg works of Pushkin, Gogol and Dostoevsky begins. Especially, as dynamics between residents and urban space continued to develop and diverge from the *brilliant* past.

Interestingly, two famous local historians – Nikolai Antsiferov and Lev Uspensky –hardly attempt to describe Petersburgers' special urban habitus. It might seem paradoxical that almost nothing is said about the special qualities of the city's natives in their influential texts, which were of great importance for the formation of ideas about St Petersburg / Leningrad as a space producing people unlike any others. Most of the heartfelt lines and bright metaphors are dedicated to Petersburg's "genius loci", which, according to Antsiferov, is completely impossible to describe. "What can I say about Petersburg," he asks, "whose possibility of being admired was pointed out by Alexander Benois just twenty years ago, and his words sounded as much like paradox for some people, as a revelation for others!"

The image of "picturesque Petersburg" was created not only by critic and art historian Benois, the author of the famous homonymous article (1902), but also by his colleagues – Mstislav Dobuzhinsky, Yevgeny Lansere and others. Due to their efforts, limited to the early 20th century, the neoclassical ensemble of the city was spotlighted as a cultural heritage which is worthy of admiration and requires preservation. By 1906, the "Old Petersburg" movement was created.[226] However, by 1922, when Antsiferov's famous work "The Soul of Petersburg" was subsequently published for the first time, it was still necessary to defend the special significance of the Petersburg cultural heritage to the history of the whole country. Several decades later, by the end of the short century, when Volkov recorded his conversations with Brodsky, the importance of the cultural phenomenon of the city on the Neva was beyond discussion and did not require additional arguments. "We all projected ourselves onto the old Petersburg. That is natural," said Brodsky.[227]

[226]For more information on the significance of Alexander Benois's works and the origins of the cult of old Petersburg, see: (Bérard 2012).
[227](Volkov 1998: 287).

All attempts to find a special "soul of the city" cannot help but refer to the memory of everyday life in it. Such memories are inevitably filled with personal experiences of narrators and demonstrate the degree of their emotional connection with the city. The texts of Benois, Antsiferov, Uspensky, and even Volkov's dialogues with Brodsky convey not only admiration of the narrators for old Petersburg, but are also meant to evoke similar feelings in readers. According to Antsiferov, "one should not set a completely unbearable task – to define the spirit of Petersburg. We need a humbler task: to try to outline the main ways by which one can acquire 'the feeling of Petersburg' and engage in heartfelt communication with the genius of its locality."

This task begins with the concept of North Palmira, as an atypical regular city for Russia, distinguished by its "right lines" and "infinitely long avenues". This city became the capital that was meant "to crown the great empire" and exemplifies the rapid break with the country's past. Like no other city in the whole world, it was built on "human bones". With shaky ground, fogs, cold weather, and a lack of any stability, it can be buried underwater at any time. This city was established "as an antithesis to the surrounding nature, as an attempt to defy it".[228] Under its streets and austere squares, there is chaos relatively organized by its creator Peter the Great. It is a city of great struggle and a great catastrophe. According to Antsiferov, "Petersburg is a city of tragic imperialism". And, of course, you cannot help remembering its 'White Nights' that "fill it with charms, make Petersburg the world's most fantastic city" (Antsiferov 1990: 13-28). All these components of Petersburg's myth were canonized by numerous followers of Benois and Antsiferov and have long since become commonplace.

Thus, Petersburg's special spirit, its genius loci, is the necessary condition for the formation of a unique Petersburg habitus. According to this logic, St Petersburg is simply called upon to produce people unlike anybody else in the world. When trying to explain Shmakov's 'miraculous' metamorphosis, Brodsky concludes that "an absolutely phenomenal thing" occurred when he "quickly passed through all stages of cultural development". Continuing this theme, Volkov recalls his conversation with Andrei Bitov, who believed that "everything in St Petersburg nurtures a person – avenues, buildings and even simple stones. And water as well. That is, you just stroll around the city and get a literary education. Because you immediately get into some sort of literary context when communicating with Petersburg stones. And thereafter you become a Petersburger, even

[228]That is how Antsiferov views the city at the first personal acquaintance with it. In his memoirs, he expresses his emotions as follows: "St Petersburg! Straight streets, right angles. Gray granite. A white veil of the wide frozen Neva. Hoarfrost is on the columns of St Isaac. What a cold! Fierce Peter has frozen in the heat of his action. The majestic sphinxes have frozen" (Antsiferov 1992: 130).

if you came from another place." Brodsky, in turn, notices: *"Whether it is the stones or not, explain it however you like, but in Petersburg there is this enigma, and it truly does influence your soul, shapes it. A person who grew up there or at least spent his youth there, it is hard to mix him up with other people".* (Volkov 1998: 286-287).

An example of such "influence" of St Petersburg on a person who was born there is in the famous memoirs of writer Lev Uspensky, when he calls himself "an old Petersburger-Leningrader who loves his city probably, more than anything else in the world."[229] He attributes his emotional attachment to the greatness and uniqueness of his city, and also by his primary socialization in St Petersburg/Leningrad. According to Uspensky, even life in the shadows of Petersburg's greatness is worthy of memoirs:

> "I looked out the window [thinking whether it makes sense to write memories]. There was a bridge of Lieutenant Schmidt overloaded with trams, buses, cars, and – to the right – the Academy of Arts with sphinxes brought from the Ancient Thebes, and – to the left – the granite stele opposite the place where the Aurora stood that night in October. There was Leningrad. And if I did not stand next to any great person in my entire life, I not only stood next to something great – to Leningrad. I lived for it and in it." (Uspensky 1970:5)

Uspensky was born and grew up in this city, thus "he always felt like an old Petersburger, everything was familiar on Petersburg's streets." People like him, intellectuals, who "grew up on the streets" of Petersburg, possessed the necessary habitus to understand each other quickly. Such relations between the city and the categorization of its residents, distinguishing natives from aliens, are discursively constructed as a special kind of competence – specific knowledge accessible only to *genuine* Petersburgers.

Uspensky demonstrates this kind of social capital with phrases scattered throughout the narrative: "'the house of Frederiks' known to all the Petersburgers" or "an old horsecar gave every Petersburger a ride for seventy-three and a half times", "every Leningrader realized that 'Dzerzhinsky, 4' is the same as 'Gorokhovaya, 2'[230] (Ibid.: 341). In his memory, there are many small and important details from everyday life that may be known to a person who was not born there only from memoirs or conversations

[229]According to Lev Lurie, "love of the city is universal and compulsory" for a modern Petersburg native, and echoed in good knowledge of its landscape and history (2014: 14).
[230]Since the late 19th century, the building at this address housed the special services of the Russian Empire, and after the revolution – the Soviet intelligence services.

with the city's natives. And only memoirs of the "genuine Petersburger" reflect a deep emotional connection with his/her native city.

Uspensky frequently discusses the Petersburg-Leningrad lanterns and lamps, and its trams. He reflects on what people in the city ate and how ice cream men and watermelon vendors sold their products. How the air of the city of his childhood was filled with the smell of horse's manure.[231] But the image of the city is constructed not only from his personal memories. They are combined with colorful metaphors, created by great poets and writers, which are well-known to an educated Petersburger/Leningrader. These metaphors lend special weight and authority to his memories. Uspensky is far from alone in his glorification of the city on the Neva. On the contrary, his narrative is embedded in the influential tradition of the "Petersburg text":

> "Oh, what a city! This is the way it smells of a western March wind, and everything will wander in the Baltic seaside fluidity, as it used to be in my childhood, as it wandered in Pushkin's epoch, earlier under 'The Moor of Peter the Great', and even earlier, in those distant times when [...] 'the common city, which is still small, [...]' was first erected above the waves of the Neva... Excellently, this is how accurately Alexei Tolstoy described this formation" (Ibid.: 171).

However, the obvious difficulty of personal choice in Uspensky's memoirs is more important. Who is he – a Petersburger or a Leningrader? The writer's youth coincided with a time when the city was twice renamed. Uspensky responds with attempts to construct a certain logic. When talking about pre-Soviet life in the city, he calls himself an "old Petersburger", thereby stressing the relevance of the past of the city in its present. In those far-off times, the future author of the memoirs, born in 1900, was still a kid and teenager. In the part of the memoirs referring to the Soviet period, the self-name 'Leningrader' often sounds. But the time and logic of naming citizens in Uspensky's memoirs frequently contradicts the approach he has chosen. The assertion that his birthplace is Petersburg is refuted by an emotional passage at some point in the memoirs: "All my life, I've lived in Leningrad, I love Leningrad more than any other city in the world."

[231]Of course, different Petersburgers remember city smells in many ways. For example, Anna Akhmatova does not agree with Uspensky. And she explains the difference in memories through attributing herself and Uspensky to different social classes. Uspensky for her is a representative of the new formation – a 'comrade' well received in respectable houses through the "backdoor" (see Lurie 2014: 15).

Uspensky's difficulties are obvious, if we consider that they lie not in simple renaming, but in the change of epochs, and, with them, the discursive series of representations of Petersburg. From the brilliant imperial capital, the city on the Neva turns into a museum located in the past of the epoch, and surviving in the space of memory. In parallel, Petersburg also became a city of three revolutions. In an effort to bring together this fragmented experience of living in "different" cities and epochs, Uspensky represents himself as both a Petersburger and a Leningrader.

A similar dilemma for the native residents can be observed again in the post-Soviet period. The city was repeatedly renamed, and this event was perceived by many people as a return to its "true" name. However, generations of Leningraders are still alive, and many of them constitute the city's intellectual elite. Therefore, doubts and discussions continue. Popular arguments concerning one's self-name are important because, in this context, Leningraders / Petersburgers are simultaneously trying to determine for themselves the specificity of the urban habitus.

> *"It may seem strange to you, but sometimes a Leningrader is more a Petersburger than today's Petersburgers. Because, you know, unfortunately, the everyday speech is heavily degrading. Those modern jokes. Of course, it cannot be denied that young people are more relaxed and free* [...] *And, in my view, despite of being young, and among them are very educated ones (!), they are the same Petersburgers.* [...] . *But if we talk about the difference between Leningraders and Petersburgers, it is in the speech. Of course, now* [many things have gone bad*]. It irritates me* (Tatyana, woman, 65 years old, a member of *the Worldwide Club of Petersburgers*, St Petersburg, January 2014).

To divide friends into the categories "Petersburgers" or "Leningraders" often seems a more difficult task than to separate "insiders" from "outsiders". As with any other imaginary community, one Petersburger cannot and should not be personally acquainted with all of its members. However, he or she needs to share with other members of his or her community a somewhat similar view of a certain set of generally accepted criteria to identify 'genuine' Petersburgers or Leningraders, which are categories that necessarily overlap. In the account above, the right Leningrader is a Petersburger who is, regardless of age: a well-educated person, socialized in the context of the rich intellectual tradition of the great city, and thus provided a certain everyday behavioral code attributed to "decent and well-bred" citizens. An external indicator allowing one to discern all these

qualities upon first meeting is, primarily, the 'special' literary language of an educated person, and then, substantial knowledge of the city's cultural history.

In the context of these discussions, it is relevant to consider how discursive boundaries between Petersburgers and Leningraders can take the form of thinking about the community's 'purity'. Both groups are basically 'insiders'. But it is precisely through discussions of differences within the community, when the criteria for separating "right Petersburgers" from "wrong Leningraders" become difficult to identify, that the specific qualities and contrasts attributed to the urban habitus are illuminated.

> *"I considered myself to be a decent person, a Leningrader.* [...] *Wherever we went to take rest* [...] *to Baku or Tashkent, or anywhere, if we told that we were from Leningrad, everyone loved us... The attitude of the older generation to the Leningraders was different. And, of course, the people in the city were different.* [...] *First of all, the city was very clean. In the [19]50s, all this [garbage] was cleaned manually by a street-sweeper.* [...] *A street-sweeper was wearing felt boots and a sheepskin coat, and a kerchief on his head, as in the film "Operation Y"*[232]. [...] *When I was a child, we had respect for adults. When a house-manager was passing our courtyard in a hat and with a briefcase, all children were shouting: "The house-manager, the house-manager is coming!" And all kids were forming up in line and standing erect, thereby demonstrating that they were not naughty. And he was saying: 'Do not be naughty!' 'No, no. We do not do anything naughty.' That is, we had respect for adults. It was impossible to be rude to an adult. To a teacher, neighbour, etc.* [...] *Cigar stubs were never thrown away. No one walked on the grass. There were signs: 'Keep Off grass'.* [...] *And if someone was stopped on the street and asked how to get to [some part of the city], he or she kindly explained to you where to go, where to turn. Probably, it also took place in other cities, but for some reason, the Leningraders were loved for this.* [...] *That is, the people were certainly different. Of course, there was more intelligentsia.* [...] [The city] *began to transform, well, it seems to me, during Perestroika. People were gradually changing.* [...] *That is, the cupidity is thriving now.* [...] *And people are somehow stupid"* (Alla, woman, 64 years old, St Petersburg, January 2014).

[232]One of the most popular Soviet comedy films *Operation Y* and *Shurik's Other Adventures* was directed by Leonid Gayday in 1965.

Petersburg's brilliant noblemen, numerous tsarist officials and wealthy merchants were replaced by Leningraders, who could reconstruct a special urban habitus, regarded, above all, as an intellectual one. In Uspensky-style memories of Leningrad, this feature is perceived as the result of a never-interrupted tradition its citizens inherited from Petersburg. The thread connecting the ages was the intelligentsia, which preserved common decencies.

All merits attributed to imaginary Leningraders (an ability and desire to keep the city clean, good breeding, etc.) are also perceived through a positive attitude towards them in other cities. It was in the translocal space, when visiting large but remote, peripheral cities, that the Leningraders could see themselves through the eyes of 'others'. They gained the confidence that the positive image of a Leningrader, well known in the most remote cities of the Soviet Union, must be 'truthful'. Alla and many others like her attempt to describe the specificity of the urban habitus, but it is a difficult task. One immediately wonders whether things were different in other cities. And 'everyone's love' for Leningraders, which would not have been felt without grounds, became useful not only for distinguishing against other cities, but also resisting against change. In Perestroika, the everyday life of the city had changed noticeably for the worse. However, under the new conditions of thriving 'cupidity', it became easier to distinguish 'their' Leningraders and Petersburgers from outsiders.

Actualized among middle-aged and older citizens, the problem of choosing a self-designation is also connected with the key challenge facing the community. There is a need to protect the special aura of the city on the Neva, and hence the space of reproduction of the Petersburg habitus, which seems impossible without preserving the rapidly shrinking imaginary community of 'genuine' Petersburgers. In recent decades, the Northern capital has been experiencing an influx of migrants, while many 'genuine' Petersburgers are fleeing the city.

> "*I was born in Leningrad. In fact, I was born not in Leningrad but in Riga. But it was an accident. My mother is a Leningrader. Mother's branch. My father never lived in Leningrad. My grandmother moved to Petersburg after the revolution. My mother was born in Leningrad in 1924. Already in Leningrad, because she was born in December*[233]. [...] *I could not say 'Petersburg' for a very long time. Piotrovsky*[234] [however, refers to] *"genuine Petersburgers"*

[233]The city was renamed Leningrad in January 1924.
[234]Mikhail Piotrovsky is Director General of the State Hermitage and President of the Worldwide Club of St Petersburgers. One of the most famous and significant intellectuals in modern Petersburg, who prefers to call himself a Petersburger

[with skepticism], *I think it is wrong. This is such a snobbish position. In my opinion, the name* [of the city] *is Piter. I began to say 'Piter' more often. In VKontakte, for example, I have indicated Leningrad as a native city, not Petersburg.* [...] *To our ears, Petersburg is such an anachronism. This is an obsolete word. The word is from the 18th-19th centuries. But not modern, I think so. That is a first. Secondly, if we talk about residents, there are neither Petersburgers nor Leningraders left in the city"* (Elena, about 60, St Petersburg, January 2014).

It can be safely assumed that Elena's grandmother was not perceived by *native* Petersburgers, who survived the hardships and horrors of the October Revolution and the Civil War, as an insider. In Elena's version, neither her grandmother and mother nor she claims the status of Petersburgers, despite the fact that Elena is already the third generation of their family living in Leningrad/Petersburg. The ideal image of a genuine Petersburger, often borrowed from the works of the most famous classics of Russian literature which created it, remains in the past for many present-day native Leningraders. This image implies certain qualities of citizenship, which are almost invisible in the modern world. Even if there are still such customs, this image nevertheless refers to the "dying breed" of the citizen. However, the very belief that such Petersburgers could be found on the streets of the city just a little while ago, and perhaps, some of them still live in it, allows for constructing ideal images of the 'right' members of the community through personal experience of contact with them.

"*There are very few of those whom I would call Petersburgers or Leningraders. There are really very few of them.* [...] *Who is a Petersburger in my view? I do not attribute myself to them at all, because I have the wrong roots. Yes, they are wrong. But I have seen Petersburgers. Actually, this is my view. Perhaps, it is also a [special social] class. [Among] the Petersburgers are also probably different layers*. [...] *It is something calm, polite, intelligent ... It is... Uh, I wanted to say a polite word, but* [they are seen as being a] *little snobbish with the indispensable 'you'* [a respectful form of address]. *The Petersburgers do not easily switch to 'you'* [a familiar form of address]. *Well, I do not know – a sign of good manners, etc. Moreover, I know the difference between a Petersburg apartment and any other one. By furniture, style, clothing. These Petersburg elderly ladies can be identified even by their costumes. This generation has already gone. But I had a chance to see them before. As for the Leningraders.*

Well, I do not know how they can differ" (Elena, about 60, St Petersburg, January 2014).

Any attempts to distinguish the native Petersburgers from the Leningraders lead a thinking person into a semantic deadlock. In fact, the same qualities are attributed to both groups. The main difference is that an important characteristic of polite 'Petersburgers' – people from the past – often appears in a hypertrophied form, turning them into snobs. Such representations constantly intersect with literary narratives about the city and its residents. Lev Lurie recalls Dovlatov's famous words: "Leningrad has an agonizing complex of a spiritual center with somewhat restricted administrative rights. The combination of inferiority and superiority makes him a very sarcastic gentleman."[235] Lurie, referring to his personal experience, continues this thought: "we would not be ourselves without snobbery, disgust for familiarity, a sick sense of self-worth" (2014: 16).

The point of view which brings together the two worlds (imperial and Soviet) is laid in all attempts to differentiate between them, which leads to the inevitable conclusion that the Leningraders are the same as Petersburgers and vice versa. Different names of the city become synonymous, as in some episodes in Uspensky's memoirs.[236] Or at the evenings of the Berlin club 'The Leningrader', when it is recited: "And in a foreign land / You live inside me / My Petersburg ... my Leningrad".[237] When differences become less significant, there are more chances to preserve the urban myth of an un-interrupted tradition which transmits the urban habitus from generation to generation.

"*For us, St Petersburg and Leningrad are still an integral whole. When we talk about the Great Patriotic War, it is primarily Leningrad. Leningrad performed a feat, not Petersburg. And it just so happens that the city changed its name four times. Therefore, this is an integral whole for us, there is no contradistinction here. Moreover, we believe that when it was Leningrad, the city was worthier of the title of the cultural capital than today. Because not only museums and monuments of architecture* [were important]. *They had already existed at that time. But people, those many generations of Petersburgers, native Leningraders,*

[235]However, Dovlatov avoids discussing the city's uniqueness. On the contrary, he asserts that, "Such cities exist in any respectable country." (Dovlatov 2003: 481-482) Brodsky shares similar thoughts, stating that one of the most characteristic features of Leningraders is "arrogance towards the rest of the country." He also says, "Spiritually, this city is still the capital. It is in the same relation to Moscow like Florence to Rome or Boston to New-York." (For more details, see: Brodsky 2016: 229-230).

[236]Or in various songs dedicated to the city. As, for example, in the song of Irina Ponarovskaya, the famous singer from the musical Leningrad family: "My Leningrad, my Petersburg".

[237]In the spring of 2015, these poems were read by club member Elena Gless at the celebration of the 10th anniversary of its foundation. "The Script of the Anniversary Evening". S. Huseynova, Field Notes.

who lived in Petersburg at that time and those who defended Leningrad. They formed the basis – the population of St Petersburg, Leningrad. Now, of course, the social and ethnic composition of the city... has dramatically changed. What was always considered the main feature of Petersburgers, Leningraders – culture in public places, public transport, theaters, cinema, there, in the philharmonic society – has been to some extent lost. Especially, it is common culture of people, it is speech culture, as people say. This is a tragedy, of course! This is a common tragedy. Including the younger generation. What slang they use! (Vladimir Axelrod, man, 74 years old, a member of *the Worldwide Club of Petersburgers*, St Petersburg, January 2014).

The heroic myth of the "siege of Leningrad" is a place of memory that allows reconciling Petersburgers and Leningraders of all generations who attribute themselves to an imaginary urban community. In the context of the collective memory of those tragic events, the emotional connection with the native city eliminates all possible differences within the community. It allows drawing a red line separating the Leningraders / Petersburgers from all those who inevitably remain outside the boundaries of the community. This is one of the events of mourning, which is localized to the city despite the fact that this event is given a very important place in a much broader narrative, and the myth of the "Great Patriotic War". The collective ritual of memory of the Blockade events allows for actualizing emotional solidarity across borders.

Both in Berlin and in Petersburg, the evening dedicated to the Blockade is the year's most important event. Usually, in the hall hosting members and guests of the Berlin club "Leningrader", there are not enough seats available. In some years, a small room can, by some miracle, accommodate up to a hundred people taking part in an evening of memory. Organizers strive to refresh annually the scenery and the agenda of the evenings. However, in general, they are all very similar. The improvised stage can be transformed into a screen, stylized as a window of a residential house, crisscrossed with paper stripes – a symbol of war shown in numerous fiction films and documentaries. On the top, there is an inscription: "Leningrad 1941-1945". To immerse themselves in an atmosphere of wartime, a documentary film, edited by members of the club and activists of the Jewish community, is screened. The audio and visual elements, consisting of music, photographs and scenes from life, form a narrative of besieged Leningrad.

"City Day" holiday concert by the Gostiny Dvor (Nevsky Prospekt).
The poster on the stage reading: "I'm a Leningrader".
St Petersburg, May 2017. Photo by S. Huseynova

Many scenes with frozen, starved, and dead residents of the city are well-known to all citizens of Russia. However, even on this mourning day, visitors will be reminded of the specifics of Leningrad and the urban habitus through scenes from everyday life and cultural events that took place during the darkest siege years. The air of the hall is filled with strong emotions. Leningraders who survived the blockade still participate in the evenings. Many of them do not hide their satisfaction in being remembered. This is the day of the siege survivors.

After watching the movie, refreshments are served.[238] Elena, the hostess of the evening, addresses the audience with an explanation that the organizers planned to set a single long table as "in a communal apartment". On this improvised table, which is meant to recall usual scenes from everyday life, there are a variety of snacks, vodka, and black bread. Everything they need to commemorate the dead. The heads of the community and the club deliver the necessary words, announce the names of all siege survivors attending the event and give them flowers. In 2012, there were more than twenty of them. Five people who survived the entire blockade in Leningrad were especially honored. In close vicinity, there is a seventy-year-old woman: "I was only a year old. Of course, I do not

[238]Usually, they are served before the event, but in 2012, this approach became part of the agenda for the evening of memory.

remember but half of our family has died. They fed me. Grandma did not wake up in the morning." Another woman complained that "We, the siege survivors, are not invited anywhere. Only here, and I will go to the Russian House[239]. While they invited us before. Once the [Russian] embassy awarded us with orders".

Occupying this vital niche, evenings in the Club become particularly relevant. Another woman, who survived the siege, was sitting opposite at the table. She raised a glass of vodka to toast mothers who helped children of the siege to survive. "Mothers changed their beautiful dresses and pumps, which they prepared for walking with us along the Nevsky Prospect, and began digging trenches." The compulsory element of the program is Soviet songs of the 1940s-50s. In 2012, they were performed by Elena, the hostess of the evening, who was accompanied on the piano. Almost the entire audience sang along with Elena. Some women joined the singer's side while other attendees began to dance. In contrast to the first part of the evening, the second is celebrated cheerfully, because they all survived, and this night is also a festivity for many of them. At the end of the event, participants were reminded again that Leningrad was a cultural capital. One of the organizers prepared and read a report on cultural life during the siege. Ordinary participants also addressed the audience. They indicated the street names where they lived in Leningrad and told episodes from everyday life.[240]

The siege, as a place of memory, is an experience that distinguishes Leningrad from all other, and not only Soviet, cities where the Second World War came. But the main 'other' city for the Leningraders / Petersburgers was and remains Moscow, where "the enemy did not reach". Moscow, as an antipode city, is one of the most popular topics for writers and local historians.[241]

The existence of Moscow-capital – a successful, competitive city – supports a discourse of the uniqueness of Petersburg and Petersburgers. I refer again to Volkov's

[239]This refers to the Russian House of Science and Culture in Berlin.

[240]One participant said: "It [the street?] is dedicated to you, the survivors of the siege." January 25, 2012. S. Huseynova, Field Notes.

[241] The contraposition of St Petersburg and Moscow, which will not be dwelled on, has a long intellectual and literary tradition that goes back to its origins in the early 19th century, and the disputes of the Slavophiles and Westerners. According to Alexander Martin, in contrast to Alexander Bashutsky – the author of the Panorama of St Petersburg (1834), Russia was in a deep social crisis, and he drew upon the clash of cities as an example. "Authors less inclined to social criticism, such as Zagoskin, Grech and Bulgarin, disagreed over this point of view. They anthropomorphized Moscow and Petersburg, referring to them as the cities with unique and opposing characters". The influential classics of Russian literature (Alexander Pushkin, *The Journey from Moscow to Petersburg*, Nikolai Gogol, *Petersburg Notes of 1836*) contributed to the formation and development of this topic. One of the first influential texts was a collection of essays by well-known journalists and literary critics Alexander Herzen (Moscow and Petersburg, 1842) and Vissarion Belinsky (St Petersburg and Moscow, 1845). Among the most famous texts of recent times is, for example, S. Smirnov's monograph dedicated to these "antagonistic cities" (see Smirnov 2000). And, above mentioned, L. Lurie and his monograph with the revealing title "Without Moscow" (2014).

conversation with Brodsky. The poet, trying to explain the specificity of the Petersburg habitus, says: "before everything else, it is difficult to confuse us, let us say, with Muscovites, at least because we speak Russian differently, right? We say 'chto' [ed.: what, that], not 'shto' [ed.: the same word with other pronunciation]. Although we can pronounce 'shto'..." (Volkov, Ibid). Similar to the Leningraders – Petersburgers distinction, the border here cannot be obvious either. But perpetual, materialized discourse of competition with Moscow, in turn, allows us to grasp the same specific elements of the Petersburg habitus – a "higher" cultural level reflected in the Petersburg Russian language, and special everyday behavioral practices.

"A pur sang Odessite"

For Odessa, however, comparison to Moscow has never been valid. *The pearl by the sea* claimed the status of the main city of Novorossia, a province created during the reign of Catherine the Great in the conquered territories of the northern Black Sea coast.[242] Among the numerous titles of Odessa, one can find "the third capital of Russia" or "the South Russian capital".[243] But these functioned more as bright metaphors than literal monikers. Odessa (and Odessa's intellectuals) never actually competed with the old and new capitals for any administrative or symbolic status, at least, it was never claimed to be the main cultural center.[244] Still, these circumstances did not deter frequent comparisons of pre-revolutionary Odessa to the Northern capital – "Petersburg en Miniatur". This was facilitated by the history of the rapid construction of two cities, their location ("eccentricity") and architecture, which sharply distinguished Petersburg and Odessa from old Russian cities and many others.[245] Comparison with St Petersburg was aimed at ascending Odessa, giving it greater importance, and further increasing Odessites' opinion about their city, which was already high enough.[246]

[242]For more details, see: (Shubin 2015).
[243]One of the first mentions of such metaphors can be found in the letters of Vissarion Belinsky, the famous literary critic, who spent three weeks in the city in 1846. "Oh, the province, what a terrible thing! Odessa is better than all provincial cities, it is definitely Russia's third capital, a charming city, but for those who pass through. To settle here is a catastrophe" (Belinsky 1956: 297). See also: V. Kalmykova. The mystery of the third capital or the myth of freedom. Quoted from: (Kalmykova, Perelmuter 2014: 584-600)
[244]Unlike Petersburg and Moscow.
[245] Such comparisons have already been made in the previous sections. For more details, see also: (Koschmal 1998: 31-32; Maurer 2003).
[246]Spiced up with compulsive humor, a comparison of modern Odessa with other cities can be found on the pages of the literary almanac "c" published by the Worldwide Club of Odessites. Despite the fact that

The main factor that brought Northern and Southern Palmira closer was a large number of foreigners ("Europeans") who created and inhabited these cities. In this field, Odessa could easily compete with St Petersburg and even surpass its claims to the symbolic status of the most European city in the Russian Empire. The rate of foreigners in Odessa's population in the first half of the 19th century was always much higher than in the northern capital. Alexander Pushkin, who was well acquainted with the highest Petersburg society, conveyed the atmosphere of life in Odessa in 1823-1824. "There everything breathes, wafts Europe, / Everything shimmers with the South, and is colorful / With lively diversity. / The tongue of golden Italy / Is heard along the merry street, / Where walks the proud Slav, / The Frenchman, the Spaniard, the Armenian, / And the Greek and the heavy Moldovan, / And the son of Egyptian earth, / The retired Corsair, Morali" (Pushkin 1960: 188). For Pushkin, who had never been outside Russia[247], the fairly young Odessa became his closest example of a West European city, none of which he was destined to visit.

In those years, Odessa was the most European city, not so much in terms of architecture (St Petersburg had already flourished), but in terms of its population of immigrants from European countries. In the second half of the 19th century, Odessa became a Jewish city, similarly, because of its influx of a large number of Jews. Ethnically and confessionally, a diverse population not only distinguished South Palmira from an absolute majority of other cities of the empire, but also determined the unique sociocultural context in which the imagined community of Odessites was constructed.

Similar to St Petersburg, in the context of Odessa's discourse, a special city was supposed to create totally original people. But unlike the capital on the Neva, which made its residents feel the most ambivalent feelings, Odessites, as a rule, loved their South Palmira – created and maintained the purely positive Odessa myth. By Odessa's centenary, it was admired as a "golden city", a "golden source" of abundance. Both travelers and ordinary people called Odessa "a paradise on Earth" (Koschmal 1998: 34).

Odessa is located in the territory of Ukraine, a list of cities worthy of comparison with *Southern Palmyra* is headed by St Petersburg and Moscow. Kiev is only in third place. "No, it is a good thing that Odessa has not become Peter's creation. [...] Well, how can Odessa be the cradle of the revolution? It is quite clear that Odessa is not Moscow. In Moscow, they did not believe in tears [an allusion to the famous Soviet film "Moscow does not believe in tears"], while in Odessa, they did not believe in Moscow. You must admit that there is a big difference between them." The authors of the article use the contrast language of comparison to emphasize the uniqueness of their native Odessa, its dissimilitude to many other cities." V. Trukhin, I. Poltorak, Congratulations to "Almanac" and all those who, for his sake, were 'tonsured' to become its 'devotees' (al'manahi i al'manashki) / / The Literary Almanac "Deribasovskaya – Rishelyevskaya", No. 3, 2003, pp. 298-300.

[247]Except for a short-term visit to the north-eastern province of the Ottoman Empire during the military campaign of 1829.

This city was often compared with Mediterranean Marseille, Florence, and Genoa. Some Odessites, Konstantin Paustovsky recalled, believed it had "noble features […] of Paris" (2013: 12). [248] Odessa historian Vasily Nadler exclaimed: "no city in the whole south of European Russia can compare to its elegant, purely European appearance or its enormous trade turnover, or its cultural significance and influence in general" (Nadler 1894: 5).

Thanks to Arkady Averchenko, the well-known satirist and playwright, we can get some idea of the Odessites' emotional attitude to their native city in the early 20th century. His essay "Odessa", published in 1911, begins with a statement derived from his personal experience, that neither a Petersburger, nor a Kharkovite, nor a Muscovite feels tender feelings towards their cities. The conversation on the deck of a ship, which took the satirist to Odessa, reveals the completely opposite feelings of an Odessite to the reader. His interlocutor, who was surprised that Averchenko visited the city for the first time, answers the question whether Odessa is good with the counter-question: "Hem... You look like a thirty-year-old man. What were you doing during these thirty years that you have never seen Odessa?" In the ensuing conversation, it turns out that everything in this city is admirable: the cost of living is unusually cheap, Odessa's streets are the most beautiful, the theater is the best in Russia, women are extremely beautiful and the climate is wonderful. "And if you only were aware of beer we have in Odessa! And restaurants!"[249] By the end of this humorous scene, which reveals this man (a caricature of a Jewish common man) to have gluttonous and completely irrational love of his native city, Averchenko concludes: "The Odessites are not like either Muscovites or Kharkovites – and I like it."

What are the distinctive characteristics of the urban habitus that distinguish the Odessites from others? Averchenko sees them as sultry and spontaneous southerners, completely opposite of northerners (Petersburgers) in their temperament and way of life. The Odessites never rush. When other cities are "immersed in feverous work", Odessites take a rest, visit restaurants and have fun. "There is no better city for an idler than Odessa." Odessites easily enter into friendly relations, which led Averchenko to believe:

[248]"Odessa is a noisy, colorful, multicolored city. Odessites like to boast a little: 'Odessa is a piece of Paris'." See: L. Pasynkov. The Peacock's Tail. About Odessa // Deribasovskaya-Rishelyevskaya, No. 17, 2004, pp. 299-300. The satirical article was first published in 1913.
In some cases, a parallel with Paris emphasizes the imaginary positive qualities of Odessa. "'To see Paris and die!' the French say. Same cannot be said for Odessa. People just want to live here. Well, we, in this sense, do not strive to be Paris..." (Golubenko 2004: 5).
[249]From this point onward, works of Arkady Averchenko, Pyotr Pilsky, Lev Slavin are cited by: (Kalmykova, Perelmuter 2014: 27-43).

"In order to become friends with a Petersburger, it takes two-three years. In Odessa, I could do this for the same number of hours." Unlike the citizens of the Northern capital, they quickly switch from the "cold, starched 'you' [ed.: formal singular]" to the "warm, friendly 'you' [ed.: informal singular]". The Odessites easily forget about their quarrels. "That is the way I see them," the satirist concludes, "wonderful, impetuous, expansive Odessites."

In the early 20th century, Averchenko was not alone in his attempts to construct the groupist discourse of 'genuine' Odessites. Similar impressions and attempts to outline discursive stereotypes can be found in an article by journalist Pyotr Pilsky, which was coincidentally published in the same year, 1911, as Averchenko's article and under the same title, "Odessa". How did Pielsky see an Odessite? "This is a Russian Marseilles. A frivolous braggart, a lazy fellow, all over outward, magnificent liar, a perky joker." And an Odessite is definitely in love with his/her city. "No city has so many loyal patriots." Pielsky continues, "Odessa itself is an opera, fairy show, dance class, railroad station, but it is not a scholar's office and not a cell of a thought and faith." Almost two decades later, writer and Odessite Lev Slavin recalled all the same qualities inherent in the Odessites and called them Gascons and the city – "Soviet Gascony".[250]

In the 19th – the early 20th century, the Odessa myth was constructed largely by intellectuals living outside the city. For them, there was a clear contrast between the population of Odessa and residents of other cities (in particular, Petersburg and Moscow).[251] The city impressed visitors not only with its luxurious and beautiful architecture, but also with the way of life of the Odessites. Geographic determinism and essentialist ethnic stereotypes helped scholars, writers, and journalists find explanations for a particular Odessa type. Italians, Frenchmen, Greeks, and Jews who lived in this city were unlike the Russians. The warm southern sun, which determined the temperament of Odessa's residents, was an abnormal phenomenon for those accustomed to the mainly northern and cold empire. The warm, 'laughing' southern sea added exoticism. But the

[250]Perhaps, referring to the analogy with the novel by Alexander Dumas "Three Musketeers" (popular in Russia) and his central character – D'Artagnan from Gascony.

[251]According to Tanny, "The nineteenth-century mythmakers who imagined and described old Odessa had one important element in common: they were all, with few exceptions, sojourners in Odessa, not native to the region" (Tanny 2011: 46).

At the same time, the flowering of Odessa literature of the early twentieth century was preceded by a multitude of events. By the middle of the XIX century, the first attempts were made to express the literary ambitions of "the brilliant capital of a new-born province". See: Literary Chronicle of Odessa // Odessa Almanac for 1840, Odessa: City Printing House, 1839, p. 1-39.

most important difference that every visitor encountered was another Russian or *Odessan language*.

Apparently, the heyday of the Odessa version of the Russian language occurred in the second half of the 19th – the early 20th century. Referring to this feature of the city's residents, Averchenko concludes that "their only shortcoming is that they do not know how to speak Russian, but since they talk more with their hands, this shortcoming is not so evident" (Ibid.: 32). Urban Russian languages, which enabled distinguishing "natives" from sojourners, evolved in Petersburg and in Baku. And a certain uniqueness of the Russian language arose in these two cities due to the ethnic and linguistic diversity of the population. In Petersburg and Baku, however, the differences were mostly confined to pronunciation. In Odessa, a mixture of the southern dialect of Russian and Yiddish, with some influence of French and later Ukrainian, led to the emergence of a specific urban dialect, which Averchenko mentioned. Walter Koschmal states that "the language of the city was a dialogue of cultures, not a monolithic monologue. Instead of the real normative Russian language, Yiddish brought the German syntax into the Odessa dialect. Instead of 'I want to tell you a few words', they say 'I have a couple of words to say to you.' ('Ich habe Ihnen ein paar Worte zu sagen')" (Ibid.: 37).

Thanks to writer Osip Rabinovich, who published a number of works in the 1860s and is now little-known, Yiddish syntax and intonations came to Russian literature.[252] Or, to put it differently, he was the first to introduce readers to the vivid everyday speech of Jewish Odessa residents, or the "Odessa language" (*odesskii iazyk*) (Tanny 2011: 45). This language became more widely known due to columnist Vlas Doroshevich, who was born in Moscow but worked in one of the Odessa newspapers for a long time. By the late 19th century, the unique mixture of Russian and Yiddish was habitually called *the Odessan language*. In his humorous essay, which became very influential as part of the Odessa myth and discourse, Doroshevich ironically calls the Odessa language "the eighth wonder of the world" He writes:

> "When listing all the merits of the city, which has managed to evolve from small Hadzhibey to big Tetyushi for a hundred years, we have forgotten one of its main merits. It could create its own language. We did not know how the Odessa language was created. But you will find a piece of any language in it. It is not even

[252]It is also recalled in the almanac "Deribasovskaya-Rishelyevskaya": "Rabinovich has even introduced the concept of the "Odessa language" – the language of Odessa, smooth and slippery, like olive oil, with light flavor of orange peel." See: Yu. Ovtin. A person of Odessa nationality, No. 58, 2014, p. 350-351.

> a language; it is vinaigrette from the languages. [...] the Odessa language does not recognize any conjugations, declensions, concords – nothing! It is a language of real chatterboxes, a language as free as the wind. A tongue that never stops wagging. [...] Oh, good Germans, who brought the secret of cooking excellent sausages and the verb 'to have' to Odessa. – I have got to walk. – You have got to laugh. [...] – They have got to talk nonsense. In Odessa, they 'have' everything... except for money. [...] That is the Odessa language, like a sausage stuffed with the world's languages and cooked a la Greek, but with a Polish sauce. Yet, the Odessites assure that they speak 'Russian'. Nowhere people lie like in Odessa!" (Doroshevich 1895: 48-61).

According to poet and literary historian Vadim Perelmuter, this "special language cocktail" only began to acculturate with the opening of Novorossiysk University (1865). "The language vaccination", which elevated the status of the Odessan language in the city, "worked well and quickly. Formal Russian was studied almost as a foreign language, more precisely – as a second native one, but it was studied."[253] However, wider results of the acculturation were not seen for a long time, as the "Odessa language", like the stereotypical image of an Odessite (a cheerful rascal and dodger, artistic idler, braggart, etc.) was little known beyond the city for a long time.

Odessa, its residents and their language started gaining fame through the literary works of the Southwestern School, formed in the first post-revolutionary decades. The literary debut of two dozen young writers and poets took place in the last years of the Russian Empire, and the Southwest was glorified by Eduard Bagritsky, Yuri Olesha, Valentin Kataev. And, of course, the most famous representatives of the 'school': Isaac Babel, Ilya Ilf and Yevgeny Petrov. All of them were Odessites. Only Olesha was born in Yelisavetgrad, but when he was three years old his family moved to Odessa, where he graduated from the famous Rishelyevskaya Gymnasium. The Southwestern School, "despite the rapid 'dispersion' of its poets and writers ('Odessa' literature which became 'Moscow' and partly 'Petersburg', more precisely 'Leningrad', in five to six years after its appearance), [had] a form and manner) of real 'aesthetic explosion'".[254] Regardless of where Odessan authors landed for the inhabitants of the city, this literature always remained that of Odessa.

[253](Kalmykova, Perelmuter 2014: 6-7).
[254](Ibid.: 596-600).

The contribution of the Southwestern School to great Russian literature became the long-awaited 'proof' that affirmed Odessites' faith in the uniqueness of their urban imaginary community. As part of the Odessa discourse, brilliant writers and poets could only succeed, and literary masterpieces which glorified southern Palmira could only be created, in the space of their admirable city, among special people. The work of the imagination of the Southwest's writers and poets contributed to the creation of ideal Odessa types. As a result, people who called themselves Odessites had acquired the 'right' type of representation, of a community canonized in high literature. At the same time, influence of the "Odessa text" went far beyond the boundaries of the city and the community of Odessites. From now on, every reader in any of the cities of the vast USSR was able to learn about the special city of Odessa and its residents like no other. Since that time, wide recognition of the uniqueness of the Odessites' imagined community remains an important resource for its construction.

As part of the Odessa myth and discourse, a special role belongs to Isaac Babel, who brought great fame to the Moldavanka, where the writer was born in 1894. This is a criminal district of the old city populated in Babel's famous *Odessa Stories* by 'genuine' Odessites of the early 20th century. Among them is one of the most famous Babel characters – criminal leader Benya Krik, whose creation sparked the inclusion of "Odessa language" in high literature ("I have a couple of words to tell you", "What should you say to aunt Khana for the roundup? Say: Benya knows for the roundup," etc.) .[255] In fact, Babel praised pre-revolutionary gangster Odessa in the first Soviet years. It was the "city of rogues and schnorrers", as Jarrod Tanny aptly calls it. Odessa would continue to be perceived as a criminal city, the homeland of famous gangster Mishka Iaponchik and female con artist Sonya the Golden Hand[256] for a rather long time. The volatile "Odessa language" itself largely consisted of thieves' and gangster cant[257].

In the postwar years, when imperial Odessa was assigned an honorable place of the by-past "golden age" in the urban discourse, stories about successful gangsters and swindlers remained an important part of the "Odessa myth". In this respect, Babel, Ilf and Petrov's works contributed to a large extent. Babel, however, devoted not only his "Odessa stories" to his native city. His non-fiction essays "Leaflets on Odessa", in which

[255]Judging by the standard of Russian language, all these phrases are grammatically incorrect, but reflect the typical elements of the "Odessa language". See: (Babel 2016: 35-41).
[256]See: (Tanny 2011: 76-78; Gubar 2014: 458-462).
[257]Oleg Gubar calls this segment of the "Odessa slang" "Odessa cant" and stresses that the "Odessa language", including the cant, underwent significant changes over time. Some words and expressions were destined to endure, but their meaning has changed greatly (Gubar '2014: 387-390).

Babel offers his version of the Odessa myth, are less well-known. He starts with an a-contrario argument: “Odessa is a very bad city, everyone knows this.”

In this city, people speak a specific Russian language. But after a couple of sentences, he came up with the idea that “one can tell a lot about this significant and enchanting city in the Russian Empire. Just think, it is a city where it is easy to live, where it is clear to live.” Odessa is a special city because “half of its population are Jews” believing in “simple” human pleasures. Babel's Odessa Jews only marry not to be lonely; only collect money to build a house; they are fond of children, and, although they are little afraid of officials, they stubbornly adhere to this life “philosophy”. “To a large extent, the atmosphere of lightness and clarity that surrounds Odessa was created due to their efforts,” Babel continues.

Then Babel creates an image of a member of the urban community by employing to the same a-contrario approach: “An Odessite is the opposite of a Petrograder.” Comparison with a resident of the capital immediately enhances the status of an Odessite, usually depicted as a brunette who knows how to earn money. “Soft-bodied and blonde” Petersburg ladies fall in love with him; he brings with him a little southern sun and lightness to the cold north. “I saw Utochkin,” Babel continues, “*a pur sang Odessite*[258], carefree and wise, fearless and thoughtful, elegant and long-armed, brilliant and stuttering.” Utochkin’s image is formed by Babel from contradictory features, and is represented as an example of a ‘right’ or ‘genuine’ (*“pur sang”*) Odessite. On the one hand, this refers to a certain and very special person. However, each ‘genuine’ Odessite is imagined, to varying degrees, as special, or in other words, unlike others. Red-haired and blue-eyed Utochkin seems to be the complete opposite of the typical Odessite-brunette described by Babel. But the obvious contradiction necessarily follows the binary construct of a “genuine Odessite”.[259] The work of Babel's imagination creates the ideal type by transferring the individual qualities of a bright athlete and pilot to the entire urban community.

And certainly, Babel possessed the necessary power to construct an influential discursive image of a *pur sang* Odessite. Or, in other words, to create an influential discourse about the unique community of ‘genuine’ Odessites. His power rested on the social capital of his recognized literary authority. But he is not only a well-known

[258]Marked by S. Huseynova. Odessite Sergei Utochkin was a legendary aviator, an athlete and racing driver widely known in the early 20th century.
[259]As a Petersburger or Bakuvian.

writer,[260] but also a "genuine Odessite". Babel, who was born and grew up in the Moldovanka, knew as much as anyone else who deserves to be called an Odessite, and who does not. As a result, the reader of the "Leaflets" sees (with some variations) the same imaginary type of an 'ideal' Odessite: a 'southern' man with a somewhat adventurous temper, who is always successful in various and often morally questionable undertakings, and who loves to go on a bender and enjoys life's pleasures.

Babel's Odessa is warm beaches and sweet spring evenings, fishermen and bourgeoisie, workers and merchants, Jews and members of the Black Hundred. This city changes people. "A prudent, cautious, selfish Polish Jew comes to us, and we make him gesticulate, hustle, rapidly combust and rapidly calm down," Babel writes. "We are still grinding them."[261] Odessa is a city full of romanticism of sea travel and adventure. In this city, "every young man – until he got married – wanted to be a ship boy on a deep-sea vessel. And we have a problem – in Odessa, we marry with unusual persistence" (Babel 2005: 43-59). As part of the myth of Odessa as a unique city, the idea resembling the St Petersburg myth, that the city's streets and air make a person special, revives. "Babel grew up in this unique city. What could be better for an inquisitive young man?" (Krumm 2005: 14).

The humor that Babel interlaced in stories about Odessa and Odessites (the way he remembers or imagines them) becomes a distinctive feature of the "Odessa text"[262] and an indispensable element of everyday life in the city on the Black Sea. In the context of the modern Odessa discourse, every 'right' Odessite is prone to spontaneous mockery at any occasion, and in various situations. Or, in other words, for an Odessite, joking is like breathing. This is his or her natural state. In the literature of the Southwestern School, the "Odessa joke" reached its peak in the works of Ilya Ilf (Fainzilberg) and Yevgeny Petrov (Valentin Katayev's brother). And if Babel created an image of the pre-revolutionary Odessa left in the past, the satirical works of Ilf and Petrov satirized the new Soviet way of life. Events in their novels take place in the first decades of Soviet power, whose establishment, in the context of the Odessa discourse, marked the beginning of a time of losses for the city.

[260]The Odessa Leaflets were written before literary activity made Babel widely known. However, the writer's popularity, which grew a short while later, cast a shadow over all his previous works and determined their contemporary perception.
[261]This text was written during the war and a large influx of refugees and emigrants.
[262]"An abundance of folklore elements of speech" and "fullness with wonderful Odessa humor". For more details, see: (Ladokhina and Ladokhin 2017: 3-6).

Not unlike Babel, co-authors Ilf and Petrov – and the original humor of their works – became famous by way of their origin. In the context of the Odessa discourse, as with Babel, it is commonly believed that "They got lucky with their place of birth, as indeed everyone who was born in our city."[263] However, "The atmosphere of satirical creativity also surrounded Ilf and Petrov" in "Gudok" (Yanovskaya 1969: 30-31) – a newspaper where they worked together with Katayev and Olesha after moving to Moscow in 1923, where they also brought the Odessa language and humor. The resounding popularity of two novels coauthored by Ilf and Petrov – *The Twelve Chairs* (1928) and *The Golden Calf* (1931) – brought no less fame to Odessa and Odessites. The main character of these "picaresque novels" is a smart and witty adventurer and con artist, Ostap Bender (a brunette, of course), who calls himself "the Great Combinator" and the son of a "Turkish citizen". In the novel, one can find only a few references to Odessa and hints at the Odessa origin of the "great combinator". In the *The Golden Calf*, Bender and his colleagues were supposed to be sent to "poor, dreaming Odessa" in their pursuit of money, and "only during the last, final revision, Odessa was replaced by Chernomorsk" (Ibid .: 74-75). And yet, it was Ostap Bender who became the most famous Odessite in literature.

According to local historian Rostislav Aleksandrov, "When Ilya Ilf came to the editorial office of the Moscow-based 'Gudok' in the 1920s, someone 'paraded' his erudition: 'Are you from Odessa? Do you speak Malorussian?' 'I speak Maloarnautsky,' Ilf replied, but only Valentin Katayev got the pun" (2015: 43-44). The joke was a connection to an Odessa street name in *"The Twelve Chairs"*. Due to the popularity of the novels by Ilf and Petrov, this street eventually became known to the entire Soviet Union, just as many of their phrases have entered the informal speech of all Soviet generations, becoming widely known sayings and proverbs. One of the most popular is "All smuggled goods are produced in Odessa, on Malaya Arnautskaya Street."[264]

In the 1930s, Ilf and Petrov became widely known outside the USSR. According to Alyona Yavorskaya, "Their books were published *and* read – this does not always coincide. Ilf and Petrov were translated into Polish, French, English, German, Japanese, Spanish, Dutch, Norwegian and even Chinese while the authors were still alive. Based on *The Twelve Chairs* – again during their lifetime – two films were adapted: in 1933 in

[263]The authors of the almanac "Deribasovskaya-Rishelievskaya" make a great contribution to the preservation and popularization of the Odessan myth. Of course, famous Ilf and Petrov were not forgotten. See: A. Yavorskaya, "Here I am in Paris – the world's first city..." // No. 53, 2012, p. 260.
[264]See also: (Gubar 2014: 273-277).

Germany– together with Poland and Czechoslovakia, in 1938 (although, there were no names of the authors of the book in the German film credits)."[265]

The first screen versions of *The Twelve Chairs* were not available to the Soviet audience. However, the contribution of Ilf and Petrov to the Odessa myth and wide popularization of the image of an Odessite is difficult to fully appreciate without referring to Soviet cinema. The film-adaptation *The Golden Calf* was screened by director Mikhail Schweitzer in 1968. *The Twelve Chairs* film was screened twice in 1971 (in two parts) and in 1976 (consisting of four episodes) by two famous Soviet filmmakers Leonid Gayday and Mark Zakharov (Rollberg 2009: 236-237; 749-750). Based on the novels, the television comedies enjoyed immense popularity and almost every citizen of the Soviet Union watched them at least once in his or her life.[266] Such popularity of the book, written by descendants of Odessa, turned *the Pearl of the Black Sea* into one of the most famous cities in the USSR.

The release of the first two films coincided with flourishing of the humorous contests of the "Club of the Funny and Inventive People" [*KVN*], where the Odessa team was one of the recognized leaders. *KVN* was banned on Soviet central television in 1972, but games continued to be held in universities, schools and other public places. From the first *KVN*, Odessa inherited one of the main contemporary urban comedy festivals – *Yumorina.*[267] Thus Odessa, which was markedly provincialized in the Soviet years, regained the symbolic status of a capital. From now on, the city by the Black Sea became the "Capital of Humor", and every year it gathered more and more guests and tourists for its festival. The last *Yumorina* officially supported by the Soviet urban authorities was held in 1976, when the second film version of the novel *Twelve Chairs* was released. Thus, for a whole decade since the beginning of the *KVN* television contest in 1966 and until 1976, Odessa and Odessites played a significant role by constantly acting as "kings of humor" on TV throughout the huge Soviet Union.

Yumorina, traditionally held on April 1, only returned to Odessa's streets and concert venues in 1987 when Perestroika started.[268] To restore the pomp and pageantry of the first festivals took a long time, and the new post-Soviet period in the history of *Yumorina* was accompanied by inevitable changes in the organization of the festival. In

[265]See: A. Yavorskaya, "Here I am in Paris". Ibid., p. 260.
[266]In the post-Soviet period, the novels by Ilf and Petrov were again adapted into films, but the popularity of the new screen versions were significantly inferior to that of the Soviet ones.
[267]The history of *Yumorina* has not been written yet. But general information is available on the website of the Odessa humor magazine "Fountain". See: Odessa's "Yumorina" – further – always! The historical reference, http://fontan-humor-odessa.com/index.php/galleries/yumorina-photohistory
[268]About the Yumorina see also: (Tanny 2011: 176-177).

the 1970s, a time of relatively high standards of living and social stability in the USSR[269], the festival certainly turned into an alternative to ideological Soviet holidays, and even competed with them, even if the founders of *Yumorina* never aspired to this. In those years, Odessa had yet to declare the seriousness of its intentions to monopolize the status of the funniest city. As early as 1973, this position was debated in a Soviet newspaper:

> "It is claimed that in terms of humor, the garland of victory should belong to Odessa. There are many of those who will say that this garland is already here today. Others might be a little doubtful. To make a matter of dispute indisputable, the whole army of Odessa humor masters was given an immense opportunity to show their talents on April 1 – April Fool's Day. Well, they have shown! The truly cheerful, witty, smart, optimistic art of experts in this genre as well as countless amateur enthusiasts was demonstrated during the eventful program of 'Yumorina-73'".[270]

In the 1990s, when the city was undergoing a serious economic crisis, the cheerful local festival allowed for maintenance of the myth of Odessa's uniqueness and its status as the capital of humor. It reminded many Odessites, who remembered the first festivals, of their recent relative prosperity and past youth. The Worldwide Odessa News reports of this time:

> "Odessa hosts *Yumorina*. It took place despite everything. It once again reminded everyone and, above all – us, that Odessa is a city of humor, that a cheerful, ironic people live here. How many times this irony, often self-irony, saved Odessites in the years of hardships. How many times we had to laugh at our troubles and these troubles receded. In Odessa, *Yumorina* is a festival-symbol, a festival-position. Therefore, all those whom audiences of other cities can only dream of came to Odessa today. On the same plane, almost as an airlifted force, to amuse us, or maybe, to get themselves into a cheerful, good mood."[271]

At the beginning of the poor 1990s, *the Worldwide Club of Odessites* took over promotion of the festival, and organization of *Yumorina* was largely a civil initiative.

[269](Hobsbawm 1994: 384-385).
[270]The Newspaper „The Banner of Communism" (Znamja kommunizma), № 65 (8523), 1973, p. 4.
[271]Yu. Genevskaya. A festival that is always with us / / The newspaper of the Worldwide Club of Odessites – The Worldwide Odessa News, No. 2 (32), 1997, p. 1.

Relatively broad renown began to return later, in the early 2000s, alongside rapid commercialization of *Yumorina* and increasing involvement of city authorities in the organization of festive events.[272] Already in 2001, the president of *the Worldwide Club*, Mikhail Zhvanetskiy, admitted in an interview that he did not approve of modern Odessa during *Yumorina.* "Humor has been lost there. Everything is imported, humor is brought from Moscow. *Yumorina* began as an initiative from below. But now it comes down from above."[273]

In 2018, when *Yumorina* celebrated its 45th anniversary with a carnival procession and concerts, Yevgeny Golubovsky, one of the most prominent members of the Presidential Council of *the Worldwide Club of Odessites* and editor of the newspaper *Worldwide Odessa News*, noted that "unlike the organized demonstrations" at the modern iterations of *Yumorina*, the festivals of the 1970s featured "an invention, excitement, the spirit of freedom".[274]

The atmosphere of the festival changes along with inevitable transformations of social, political and cultural contexts. But the urban festival has always remained a convenient opportunity to annually demonstrate recognition of Odessa as a "capital of humor" by the most famous and influential representatives of the genre, who achieved wide popularity in significant other cities. Both in the 1970s and in the post-Soviet years, the myth of "Odessa – the capital of humor" was cultivated by constant attention from the artistic and literary communities of the 'old' and 'new' capital: St Petersburg and Moscow. Golubovsky recalls how in the 1970s "the best humorous writers came to Odessa. What evenings took place in the House of Actors! Grisha Gorin, Arkady Arkanov, Igor Irtenyev... [275] The most influential newspapers sent their correspondents – Yura Rost with a camera in his hands[276] [...]. And, of course, the better representatives of

[272]An important role was played by Odessa businessman Alexander Pavlovsky. According to Vita Markina, "a colorful show dedicated to April 1 again appeared in our life in Odessa after a long break, at Alexander Pavlovsky's initiative. It was Alexander Ilyich who undertook the organization of the city's *Yumorina*. For more details see: V. Markina. Possessed by Odessa // Almanac "Deribasovskaya – Rishelyevskaya", No. 58, 2014, p. 116-122.

[273]What, of course, does not prevent the satirist from expressing his love for the city: "But I love Odessa, I cannot live without it. I have built a house there, so I'm not just standing on my feet in Odessa, I'm sitting there on my whole butt." See: Mikhail Zhvanetskiy: "All humor is brought to Odessa from Moscow", https://www.2000.ua/v-nomere/aspekty/art/mikhail-zhvanetskij-ves-jumor-v-odessu-privozitsja-iz-moskvy_arhiv_art.htm

[274]"Komediada" – a new stage of development in the life of "Yumorina" (05/04/2018), https://www.odessitclub.org/index.php/novosti-i-publikatsii/2113-komediada

According to O. Kurochkin, the accentuated apolitical nature of the first *Yumorina* could not prevent the fact that the festivals were perceived as "a breath of freedom". On the contrary, kitsch and bad taste dominated at *Yumorina*s held in the 2000s (Kurochkin 2010: 14-16).

[275]Guests of *Yumorina* from Moscow. Gorin and Arkanov were famous satirists and playwrights; Irtenyev is a poet, a representative of the so-called ironic direction.

[276]Famous Moscow journalist, writer and photographer.

the Vecherka[277] [...] Valery Hayit[278], Arkady Tsykun... [279] Initially, these were festivals of wit, where intellect and mental acuity were so important."[280]

In the late Soviet and post-Soviet years of *Yumorina*, one could meet almost all the most famous Russian-language writer-humorists and satirists, as well as performers from Moscow and St Petersburg, among the airlifted force of comedians landed in Odessa for the festival. In 1987, the first revived *Yumorina* was attended by the famous Leningrad Clownery Theater "Litsedei" founded in the 1970s in the city on the Neva.[281]

> "At that time they arranged a grandiose action at the monument to Duke [Richelieu] – with explosions, fire engines and a huge amount of foam, which could not have been removed from the pavement for a long time. This was quite in the spirit of the time, when people suddenly felt the smell of freedom and it became possible to do everything they could ever desire: for example, to go out, amuse themselves and involve everybody who was nearby in this amusement".[282]

In 2018, the regular "airlifted force" did not arrive in Odessa. The 45th anniversary was preceded by a three-year break in mass public events caused by the annexation of Crimea and the conflict in Ukraine's east.[283] The same conflict led to the emergence of a new festival. After 2014, the Russian city of Sochi hosts the annual *International Festival of Humor and Satire,* whose organizers emphasize its direct continuity with Odessa's *Yumorina.*[284] It is difficult to say how the fate of the festival transferred to another Black Sea city will unfold, but the "airlifted force" of Russian humorists and satirists, who conferred Odessa's *Yumorina* special status and created an atmosphere, *of which*

[277]This refers to the popular local newspaper "Vechernaya Odessa" [ed.: "Evening Odessa"].
[278]The captain of the first the Odessa KVN team, which became renowned in the 1960s, the famous writer, satirist, one of the most prominent members of the Presidential Council of the World-Wide Club of Odessites.
[279]Cartoonist Arkady Tsykun is the author of the emblem of *Yumorina* – "the well-known sailor with the inscription 'The First of April'. Odessites of an older generation remember that the exhibition of caricatures was an integral part of *Yumorina* and was placed in all shop-windows on Deribasovskaya Street on April Fool's Day." See: The Club of the Odessa Cartoonists marks 35!, https://www.odessitclub.org/index.php/novosti-i-publikatsii/2107-klubu-odesskikh-karikaturistov-35
[280]"Komediada" – a new stage. Ibid.
[281]See: The official website of the Theater "Litsedei", http://licedei.com/
[282]A. G. "Litsedei" minus ... / / The newspaper of the World-Wide Club of Odessites – "The World-Wide Odessa News", № 2 (32), p. 6.
[283]First of all, this break was related to the carnival. However, public events were not completely canceled in those years, and events that allow us to recall the status of the capital of humor are organized not only for *Yumorina.* For example, in 2016, the actors of the Maski Theater invented and held the Red City Festival for the Day of the City. "The slogans 'The red-haired people are a gold reserve of humanity!' and 'The red-haired people are not a hair color, but a state of mind' brought together hundreds of Odessites at the monument to Duke on Primorsky Boulevard." See: Tomorrow, our city marks 222. The red festival as a gift // Vechernaya [ed.: Evening] Odessa daily, No. 97-98 (10358-10359), 01. 09. 2016, p. 1.
[284]See, for example: The 2017 Yumorina International Humor and Satire Festival, https://www.culture.ru/events/197796/mezhdunarodnyi-festival-yumora-i-satiry-yumorina-2017

audiences of other cities could only dream, is unlikely to land on the banks of *Southern Palmyra* for a long time. One of the carnival posters presented in Odessa in 2018 reads: "A gold reserve of laugh, this is 'what indeed' we have!" This *reserve* has been significantly depleted since the flow of humor from Moscow decreased.

However, even without conflict, a number of rivals of Odessa's *Yumorina* have emerged. On April 1, 2018, the "Mimigrants" Clown-Mime Theater in St Petersburg held the international *Funny Festival* for the fifteenth time.[285] Of course, attempts to 'clone' a festival can be understood not only as a rivalry to the "capital of humor". Numerous Odessites living in Petersburg can feel closer to their native city on this day. Alexander Kirichenko, the chairman of the regional branch of *The Worldwide Club – the club of St Petersburg's Odessites "Northern Palmyra"*, recalls the 2013 April Fool's Day:

> "*We are friends with the 'Mimigrants' Clown-Mime Theater. We are friends with their artistic director. On April 1, they hold the so-called 'Funny Festival' here* [in St Petersburg]. *It involves many organizations. Well, we have joined them since the second year of our existence.*[286] *Our 'Funny Festival' ends with Odessa's Yumorina here, in the restaurant* ['Odessa-Mama', where the interview was conducted]. *All this is connected with a column of guisers walking along Nevsky* [Prospekt]. *The police secure them. A number of people is large enough. A big concert with the participation of our club on a temporary stage is arranged on Malaya Konyushennaya near the monument to Gogol. Why Gogol? The first Ukrainian satirist who was born April 1 and lived here (smiling).* [...] *There was the following picture: a police car is driving along Nevsky Prospect, Gogol and Ostap Bender wearing white shawls are walking behind the car. Accordingly, Gogol is an actor of the Poltava Theater with make-up on* [who came to visit the club]. *Ostap Bender is your humble servant. They lead a donkey. There is a column of drummers, clowns. It is fun! It really catches. Everything takes place on a dull weekday. We are smiling. People are smiling. It seems plenty nice"* (man, 48 years old, Petersburg, January 2014).

Odessite Kirichenko sees *Yumorina* as a more grandiose event. This spirit of uniqueness can be expressed by the phrase: "In the whole world, it is just April 1, while in Odessa – a festival".[287] On the one hand, it becomes increasingly difficult to maintain

[285]The festival brings together friends, http://mimigrants.ru/festival.html
[286]The date of birth of the St Petersburg club of Odessites "Northern Palmyra" is celebrated on April 1, 2010.
[287]This is the title of an article in the newspaper "Vechernaya Odessa", No. 38 (10299), 2016, p. 4.

a monopoly on the status of the "capital of humor" over time. On the other hand, there are new prospects for a broad demonstration of *genuine Odessiteness*, when natives of the city begin to play an active role in translocalization of April 1.

Discursively, the celebration of *Yumorina* in the post-Soviet years is represented as "restoration" of an interrupted tradition, which legitimizes claims to preserve Odessa's status of the "capital of humor", and Odessites' image of "natural-born jokers". But continuity of discourse, only on the local level, is insufficient. It is important that this status and image is recognized not only by the people of Odessa, but also by Muscovites, St Petersburgers, and residents of significant other cities. In the post-Soviet years, when prose and poetry noticeably lost their influence, television supplanted them in helping Odessites reach a mass audience. During the post-Soviet period, Odessites played a significant role in humorous and satirical television genres dominating in the Russian-speaking space. A year before the return of *Yumorina*, the *KVN* contest was resumed. The champion of the first season became the team "Odessa Gentlemen". *KVN* games initially released on the central TV channels of the Soviet Union have instantly regained the mass audience of the 1960s and once again confirmed the legitimacy of Odessa's claims to the title of the capital of humor.

Many representatives of the second generation of *KVN* players took advantage of the opportunities provided for rapid commercialization of the contest and turned their teams into professional variety troupes. Having gained nationwide fame in the final years of the USSR, the Odessa team has also turned into a troupe – the Club of Odessa Gentlemen, which got access to the highest-rated Russian TV channels, and broadcast their programs for a large part of the Russian-speaking post-Soviet audience. As a result, the Gentleman Show successfully supported the discursive construct of Odessa as the "capital of humor" for many years. The Odessa comic-troupe "Masks", created in 1984, achieved the same effect.[288] Actors of the troupe created the popular silent comedy series "The Masks Show",[289] which was broadcast on various Russian TV channels since 1991. With the restoration of *Yumorina,* the members of the troupe became its permanent participants. In 2011, the theater organized and held the first International Festival of

[288]The head of the troupe Georgy Deliyev was born in the city of Kherson and moved to Odessa to study at the Civil Engineering Institute at the age of only 17. His biography is an example of a relatively easier, compared with Petersburgers, integration into the Odessites' community. However, the "Odessa face" of the "Masks" is actor and poet Boris Barsky, a native Odessite. Deliyev and Barsky started their acting career in cooperation with the Leningrad theater "Litsedei" and its founder Vyacheslav Polunin. See: Georgy Deliyev. Biography, http://www.kino-teatr.ru/kino/director/post/1223/bio/; Boris Barsky. Biography, http://www.kino-teatr.ru/kino/acter/m/post/330/bio/

[289]See: The Theatre "Mask Show", http://www.maski.com.ua/

clowns and mimes, *Komediada*, which has since become an obligatory part of the program of *Yumorina.*[290] The program of *Komediada* envisaged holding a contest, which allows preserving the status of *Yumorina* as an event of both local and international significance.[291]

The tradition to go to Moscow for fame and a successful career was maintained throughout the Soviet years and was not interrupted after the collapse of the USSR. Unlike the Petersburgers, who are negative about emigration of their talents, the Odessites prefer to be proud of them. Only recognition in one of significant other cities makes an Odessite 'great' in the eyes of his or her countrymen, and also gives a special aura to the city. According to Leonid Rukman, the former director of *the Worldwide Club*: "Odessa really was the third capital of the world! Uh ... (misspoke.) Russia in those years [meaning pre-revolutionary capitals]. Therefore, it was already established that Odessa delivers talents. Talents! Then they leave and glorify Odessa in many cities and countries" (man, 75 years old, Odessa, 19.09.2012).

Two famous Odessites, writer and performer Mikhail Zhvanetskiy – the president of *the Worldwide Club*, and comedian Roman Kartsev, have successfully popularized the images of Odessa and Odessites on Russian TV channels for several decades.[292] In the post-Soviet period, Rostislav Hayit and Leonid Baratz[293], together with their colleagues, created "Quartet I Theater" in Moscow.[294] Several theatrical performances of Quartet I, as well as comedy movies inspired by the performances, brought fame to the actors, and further supported the discursive image of the Odessites as "natural-born humorists". Actress Nonna Grishaeva, who works a lot with Quartet I, became widely known. This list of the Odessites who achieved fame in Moscow in the genres of satire and humor goes on. The list of Odessites, consisting of prose writers and poets alike, who all prefer the same genre of humor and satire might be even more extensive. But all authors who asserted themselves in the last decades grew in the long shadow of the Southeastern

[290]About festival, http://www.comediada.com.ua/festival/2018/about/

[291]"The festival expands the geography of the participants every year. If last year the audience saw clowns from Spain, Hungary, Israel, Poland, France, Romania, Moldova, Belarus, this year, *Komediada* brought together actors and producers not only from Spain, Hungary and Israel but also from Japan, France, Canada, Germany, Italy, the USA and Switzerland. Young performers and collectives competed for a grand prize and other awards of the creative contest." See: Komediada – a new round. Ibid.

[292]It should be stressed once again that the main Russian TV channels are accessible to residents of most post-Soviet republics and are very popular in the Russian-speaking space.

[293]Rostislav Khait is the son of Valery Hait, the famous Odessa satirist, vice-president of the Worldwide Club of Odessites, and permanent author of the almanac Deribasovskaya-Rishelievskaya. Leonid Barats is the son of a new director of the same club (appointed in 2017). See: Grigory Barats: Dividends of Pleasure//The newspaper of the World-Wide Club of Odessites – World-Wide Odessa News, № 1 (103), 2018, p. 10.

[294]Quartet I. The Theatrical Biography, http://www.kvartet-i.ru/about.htm

School, and no one in the new generation of authors succeeded in reaching popularity of the "fathers-creators" of the "Odessa text". The works of Babel, Katayev, Ilf and Petrov went far beyond the boundaries of the Odessa context. These famous authors have experimented in different genres and relevant topics. They managed not only to construct a discourse of the uniqueness of Odessa and Odessites, but also to put the life and specifics of their native city into a much broader context. Thus, they were popular far beyond Odessa.

In contrast, the "Odessa text" of recent decades is completely focused on everyday life of the native city and exploits, for the most part, the discursive construct of Odessa as the "capital of humor" and the Odessites "as natural-born jokers" long created by previous generations of authors. The usual and most common genre is easy-to-read short stories, novellas, humorous stories, flash-fiction stories, and prosaic sketches that do not pretend to aspire to lofty literature. As Mikhail Zhvanetskiy aptly remarked, "there are many writers in Odessa, because you do not have to write anything. To write a story, you need to open a window and just record it" (Zhvanetskiy 2007: 5). Living imagination of authors-observers often leads to a gritty, somewhat grotesque depiction of the colorful everyday life in Odessa.

Currently, according to Pierre Norah, the Odessites have almost reached a "particular historical moment, a turning point where consciousness of a break with the past is bound up with the sense that memory has been torn - but torn in such a way as to pose the problem of the embodiment of memory in certain sites where a sense of historical continuity persists. There are *lieux de me'moire,* sites of memory, because there are no longer *milieux de me'moire,* real environments of memory" (Nora 1989: 7). For the vast majority of the Odessites scattered around the world and transformed into a transnational community, such a place of memory becomes a construct of ideal Odessa, where they spent their younger years, and of the Odessites' 'special' lifestyle. Modern works, as a rule, are filled with everyday conversations aimed at conveying the colorfulness of – as the authors want so much to believe – the still living "Odessa language". They are filled with obligatory humorous episodes from everyday life. This genre is aimed at preserving, at least in literature, the special habitus of the Odessites and the aura of a unique southern city by the sea.[295] In one text, there may be intersecting notes of nostalgia, sadness and optimism for Odessa's past and future.

[295]Typical versions of the modern "Odessa text" are the works by Mikhail Zhvanetskiy (2007), Georgy Golubenko (2008), Valery Khait, Semyon Livshin, Leonid Sushchenko, Roman Kartsev, etc. (See: Khait 2015).

> "Yes, my city has been given a heavy lurch, it is about to capsize and go underwater like a wounded whale. But something has remained. There are sparkles of the Odessa speech. This is ineradicable, it is in our genes, and I always recognize Odessa by this code – whether on the Primorsky Boulevard or on Brighton's boardwalk. And that's why I know for sure that no matter how Odessa changes, it will still remain Odessa".[296]

The more Odessa flavors (language, communal apartments, courtyard life, familiar faces on favorite promenades, etc.) diminish in a modern city, the more they appear in literary works. Without them, according to Odessites, Southern Palmira is threatened with the loss of all its charm.[297] In the context of the scattered community, the memory of the 'right' "Odessa way of life", which maintains continuity of the constructed tradition, is concentrated in the "Odessa text" inscribed in the unique cultural landscape of the old city, which, despite the last decades of its destruction, is still possible to see and feel. Meanwhile, the Odessa classic literature is actively popularized by *the Worldwide Club of Odessites* through a variety of practices (numerous publications, installation of monuments, holding various contests and awarding prizes[298]).

With the most active participation of the same club, the modern "Odessa text" is also being popularized. The club, as an institution of the imaginary urban community, undertakes three missions in this regard. It contributes to the creation of a specific physical and cultural space (the club itself) which brings together "genuine Odessites", who are members of the urban community elite and thus possess the necessary social capital. Many members of the club have the power to construct the Odessa discourse. At the same time, the club creates a virtual Odessa space – the website, as one of the tools, whose active use allows its managers to declare the successful "unification of all Odessites" around the globe.[299] The club also becomes an important symbolic center of

[296]Our Humor, a story by Roman Kartsev. Cited by (Khait 2015: 171).
[297]The same Zhvanetskiy conveys the myth of the uniqueness of the city through stories about Odessa's everyday life and ordinary conversations of its residents. "I am walking around Odessa and I do not see anything interesting. – And you will not see, you should listen" (Zhvanetskiy 2007: 94).
[298]For example, the Odessa International Isaak Babel Literary Prize, which will be awarded for the second time in 2018, http://babel-premia-odessa.org.ua/
[299]One of the latest publications on the website says: "The unification of Odessites living today around the world continues, and it is widespread. If recently we have had stable contacts with only a few Odessa communities, now we have every reason to say: 'We have broken the ice' [Ostap Bender's famous phrase from the novel *The Twelve Chairs*]. And now nothing will stop it." The same publication contains detailed statistics of the website visits." The World-Wide Club of Odessites. The World Without Borders. Published on 04/23/2018, https://www.odessitclub.org/index.php/novosti-i-publikatsii/2136-vsemirnyj-klub-odessitov-mir-bez-granits

the transnational 'global' urban community, in whose space "genuine Odessites" can still dominate and maintain the myth of the continuity of their tradition.

As for the 'tradition' of being an Odessite, it has been largely reduced in recent decades to specific urban humor directly associated with the "Odessa language", which should theoretically be thick in the air of Odessa. According to Zhvanetskiy, "For an outsider, Odessites continuously humorize, but this is not humor, it is a state caused by heat and blatancy" (Zhvanetskiy 2007: 5). Or, in other words, the "Odessa language" is perceived by citizens of other Russian-speaking cities as a language of humor and irony. Informal conversations and interviews with Odessites reveal that such ideas of the "Odessa language" are familiar to many people from their personal experience. Incorrectly constructed phrases provoke laughter among residents of other cities. While, for Odessites, it is simply everyday speech. Lena, a 42-year-old woman, describing herself as an eighth-generation Odessite, recalled the following events that happened in her life:

> "*Once guests came to us from Kiev and we were traveling with them on the tram, which, as usual, was full of pensioners. Someone said something in our language. These guests laughed so much! They left the tram and laughed! But I was not laughing. I was used to it. Or once in Moscow, when I worked there, one employee had a birthday. She brought champagne, poured it into our glasses and said: 'Well, let's drink to my health.' And I told that Odessites usually say: 'Let me be healthy for you!' She laughed so much! She liked it very much! But it did not seem funny to me*".[300]

Similar stories are recalled by Mikhail Misozhnik, who has headed the Berlin Club of Odessites since 2005:

> *"I had such an incident. We came to Kartsev's concert (in Berlin). There were people from Dnepropetrovsk. Kartsev has such a sketch in his repertoire: he comes to the Slavic Bazaar, a restaurant in Moscow, and says to the waiter: 'Give me something liquid.' In Odessa, they call a soup, borscht liquid food. Not the first course, but liquid food. That waiter scoured the restaurant for the order. Then he approached and said: 'Today they did not bring any liquid food.' We started laughing while they were sitting and looking at us. Then they asked: why are you*

[300]An informal conversation with Lena took place in Odessa on September 2012. S. Huseynova, Field Notes.

laughing, what did he say? You see? That is why Kartsev, Zhvanetskiy's concerts were attended mostly by Odessites" (man, 67 years old, Berlin, May 2011).

It is this *state*, that is, command of the Odessa language as an important element of urban habitus, perceived by outsiders as irony inherent in Odessites, that becomes a key part of the myth of the city and the discourse of Odessites. Based on this imaginary of an Odessite constantly cracking jokes, *Yumorina* was organized. This image became the key in the modern "Odessa text". "I call humor in Odessa," Roman Kartsev writes, "a talking jazz because you need to have perfect pitch: if you go to the left – you will ruin humor, if you go to the right – you will destroy the intonation.[301] The Odessa language requires precise intonation, sensitivity to the music of the word, lightness."[302] This is how the Odessites imagine themselves and this is how residents of significant other cities portray them, for example, natives of Northern Palmira. At one of the meetings of the board members of the Club of Leningraders, there was a dispute caused by a discussion of program versions for the next evening dedicated to Jewish humor.[303]

S.: *We need to hold a contest of Jewish humor. We'll invite three rabbis*.[304] [Speakers] *will leave the hall, and they will evaluate.*

L.: *This is for the Club of Odessites, not for the Club of Leningraders!*

S.: *We must attract people, because everyone knows funny stories.*

L.: *To be honest, I cannot imagine this event at all. It took quite a lot of courage to announce such an event! I cannot imagine!* [...].

M.: *There is no concept. What about inviting someone. Look at how L.* [the head of the club "Moscow"] *behaves herself. She does everything herself, but she invites specialists to all the evenings.*

L.: *Where will you find a specialist in Jewish humor?*

M.: *What S. has read is not funny to me yet. We want to organize all events ourselves, whether we are capable or not. Maybe it is good. We have a more intelligent club than others.* [...].

Zh.: *It is time to give up our talents!*

K.: *We should not give up the talents under any circumstances, but we should attract specialists!* [...].

[301]Here Kartsev paraphrases fixed expressions that can be found in many Russian folklore tales.
[302]Cited by: (Khait, Ibid.: 164).
[303]Since clubs operate within the Jewish community, Jewish themes are always emphasized, but often remain only in the title and are even more rarely present in some special reports or documentary films.
[304]That is three members of the jury, dressed as rabbis.

K.: *The joke is that I was appointed responsible for a day of humor! We have already fixed the date of the evening, we cannot change it!* [...]. *Humor is funny stories. Someone will come out and tell a couple of anecdotes. Then a YouTube video will be shown. There are Jewish dances. Hasids are dancing very funny. I started looking for the topic of Jewish humor* [on the Internet]. *I read and I am not having fun. Three-quarters below the belt.*[305]*I hope that we will not have below-the-belt jokes.*

L.: *I hope so!*

I.: *We are intelligent people!*

K.: *When I read modern Odessa jokes! "How do you live? - Like a watermelon: the paunch is growing while the tail*[306] *is getting dry."– Excuse me, but I cannot take such humor!*

I.: *That is right!*

M.: *Would you like to say that everything should be left except the word 'tail'?* [Everyone laughs]

K.*: I just want it not to be below the belt.* [...].

I.: *We do not have a scenario for the event, this is the main problem!*

K.: *We will explain that Jewish humor is what the Jews invented to joke about themselves, not the "Armenian radio". And there is no need to joke about a Chukchi.*[307]

L.: *This is a concept!*

I.: *Guberman!*[308] *I have all his works!*

K.: *He leaves me with mixed feelings.*

I.: *He also writes on various subjects: women, Jews.*

S.: *I have some of Guberman's works! There are his relatively new 'gariki': "Standing like by prisons, guards / Outpost by the Kremlin and embassy yards / More than anyone else, Russia protects / Foreigners, leaders and thieves.*

All participants of the meeting: And what does Jewish humor have to do with this?!

[305]That is frivolous humor, often with sexual subjects.
[306]The slang word used for the male sexual organ.
[307]Topics for the Soviet-era popular anecdotes. According to Oleg Gubar, "the phenomenon of this 'Armenian Radio' is a purely Odessa invention" (Gubar 2014: 496 - 498).
[308]Igor Guberman, a writer known for his satirical quatrains – 'gariki'. See: A Selection of Gariki, http://www.florentine-society.ru/demo.html

L.: *Guys! Don't do that! Well, that is enough! Excuse me, it will be... Miserably! Whatever it is and whatever we come up with! It is a shame for the Leningrad club! Because we should not have taken so multifaceted subject. We need to use something as a basis. But we do not have it! While there is yet time, let's find out how much it would cost to hire a professional.* [...].

S.: *Do you want them to come and to do nothing but laugh?*

Zh.: *Yes, this is an evening of humor!* [...]

L.: *Here is another point. As I understand it, this evening is being organized by the club because the Odessites held the same event. But I already told you that Odessites are not us. They are completely... They are completely different on the molecular level!*

I.: *This is ethnicity!*

L.: *I went with them to Dresden. And I spent the whole day with them. So who are Odessites?. Being an Odessite means to lay the table as they do in Odessa. The whole nine yards! With eggplants, potatoes, stuffed fish, a lot of vodka. As soon as they drink two and a half shots, they cannot wait to get a microphone! Because they all are gushing! From men to women! You see, it runs in their blood! And this "fountain", we will not tell... What level it is, but it is not for us! While for them, it is perfectly normal! For them, it is just a regular evening! We are going to arrange an evening of humor. We can drink five bottles of vodka, but we will not gush like them! We are different! You see, we are northern, we are snobs! We are completely different, and one should not associate us with either Kiev or Moscow. Leningrad does not have the right to hold such evenings! If we have already done it* [i. e. have scheduled an evening of humor], *I think we urgently need to look for someone to whom we can give the job!* [i. e. to find a specialist]. *Only in this way can we get out of the situation! Otherwise, it will be a shame! I can offer you to watch Mark Zakharov's* [films] *Memorial Prayer and Fiddler on the Roof – Hollywood films, almost no one* [of the members of the club] *has seen.*

Zh: *They have been screened in Kiev [the city club]. There were a lot of our people.*

L.: *Both of them run for three hours. This is a classic Jewish humor! All the rest, sorry, is lowbrow humor. I have expressed my opinion, although I promised M.*

to remain silent! [...] *None of us can tell anecdotes, we have many other talents.*[309]

Odessites also often express similar feelings to natives of other cities, who created their own clubs (Muscovites, Leningraders, etc.). According to Mikhail Misozhnik, his friends are:

"*Mostly Odessites. They [migrants from other cities] really do not understand us*. [...] *For example, Moscow. It is a good club. But they have something completely different: Beethoven, Bach. We are simpler (laughs).* [the Odessites] *This is ethnicity (laughs). Well, first of all, they talk, you see, I talk in a similar way, you see. I talk but I do not pronounce a half of the alphabet. You see. That is the way we live our whole life.* [...] *I was born in the third generation in Odessa, and humor accompanies us throughout our lives. When we have a meeting of the* [club] *council, we spend an hour telling anecdotes, laughing and then work begins… For example, we thought up the birthday of stuffed fish* [a favorite dish of Odessa cuisine*]. This evening was, of course, amazing! And a* [fishing] *net was hung up, and prizes were given. And we learned songs. And a biography of when stuffed fish was cooked for the first time. It was very interesting! But if you make us mark the centenary of any poet, we will not do it"* (man, 67 years old, May 2011, Berlin).

The meeting brought together twelve members of the Club of Leningraders and none of them tried to contravene the observations of L. (woman, 56 years old), or to question her groupist ideas of the Odessites. On the contrary, all those present demonstrated their full understanding of L.'s story. Each of them had, to one degree or another, a rich experience of communicating with Odessites in exile. Both clubs – Leningraders and Odessites – hold their evenings in one Jewish community. Over the years of living in Berlin, the Leningraders have participated in joint meetings with Odessites multiple times when attending anniversary evenings and receiving them in their clubs, participating in large Jewish holidays, etc. The acquired experience of personal communication only confirmed the participants' opinions that a "typical Odessite" is a noisy and spontaneous southerner, who speaks the "Odessa language", necessarily loves "Odessa cuisine", is capable of telling a lot of impromptu jokes in public (often very

[309]The meeting of the board members of the Club of Leningraders, 04.03.2011. S. Huseynova, Field Notes.

questionable in terms of common courtesy), and is a born humorist and joker. It can be assumed that "intellectuals, snobs and northerners" from Leningrad, who are well versed in Russian literature and often saw performances of humorists from Odessa,[310] are well acquainted with the discursive image of the "typical representative" of *Southern Palmyra*. And this literary image is superimposed on their perception of certain Odessites. When making judgments about the Odessites, the familiar essentialist geographical categories 'northerners' / 'southerners', which are still in demand to explain the specifics of different urban habitus, usually come in handy.

To emphasize profoundness of differences, there is also the familiar category of 'nation', understood in the primordial sense. Trying to explain their dissimilarity to Russian-speaking residents of other cities,[311] the members of the community often resort to the same useful groupist categories, Odessites as a nation or ethnicity. It does not mean that they believe in the real existence of the "nation of Odessites". In most cases the category 'nation' is the only metaphor that is used to explain imaginary group differences and intragroup solidarity. Or, in other words, they can find 'simple' and understandable categories that allow them to explain their dissimilarity, only in the essentialist language of the description of ethno-national differences internalized from childhood.[312]

However, despite the obvious dominance of these qualities, some other properties were attributed to the Odessa urban habitus during wartime. In the Soviet narrative about the Great Patriotic War, a special role is assigned to the heroic myth of the "defense of Odessa". *The Pearl by the Sea*, a city of adventurous merchants, con artists and bandits took on the role of a hero-city for the first time in its history.[313] Popular songs and films of wartime and post-war years helped to create an image of an Odessite who is creative and resourceful due to his or her Odessa habitus and stays positive even in hard times. Amid fierce hostilities and even while performing a feat, a dashing Odessite continues to make jokes and mock everything.

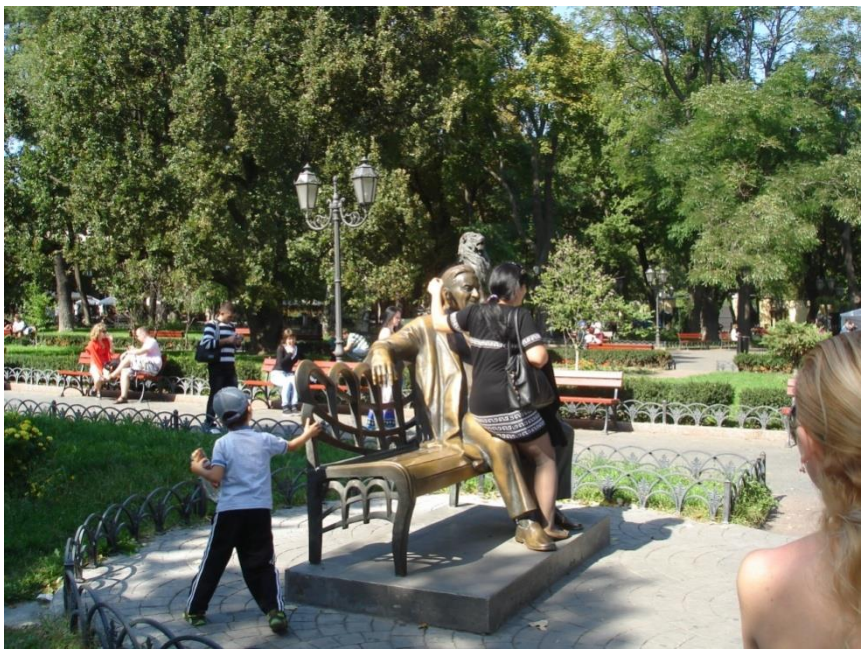
The film *Two Soldiers* (1943, Tashkent Film Studio[314]) has brought fame to this renewed image of an Odessite. The role of a brave and lively Odessite was played by

[310]Almost all Russian-speaking emigrants known to me, who now live in Berlin, watch Russian TV channels. As for emigrants from Ukraine, the situation has changed somewhat after 2014. But Russian television is still very popular in this environment.
[311]Cities, specifically, because the habitus in question does not extend to villagers. People from the village are perceived as people from another world that is often hostile to the big city.
[312]See, for example: "An Odessite is ethnicity?" (Gubar 2007: 154-160). Yu. Ovtin., "An ethnic Odessite" // Almanac "Deribasovskaya – Rishelyevskaya", No. 58, 2014, p. 348-355.
[313]For more details, see: (King 2011: 251-268).
[314]During wartime, Moscow, Leningrad and Kiev film studios were evacuated to Kazakhstan and Central Asia. "Part of filmmakers from the European part of the country was evacuated to Tashkent" (Zorkaya 2006: 252).

famous actor Mark Bernes. The film was based on the story of Lev Slavin, one of the most prominent representatives of the "Southwestern School". According to Rostislav Aleksandrov, this work retains a "laconic but accurately and lively written description of the true Odessa pronunciation."[315] The events in the film take place on the Leningrad front. The character of Bernes, Arkady Dzyubin, wears a sailor shirt under his infantryman's blouse to stress his connection to the city by the sea and the romantic image of a dashing seaman. When describing this soldier from Odessa, one of the heroines of the film remarks: "so noticeable, cheerful, brisk, laughing, looks like a movie!" Bernes, who was not an Odessite, diligently reproduces the urban language. He was ready to defend with fists the honor of his native city that was under occupation by the time. Responding to the question of the main heroine of the film: "Are you an actor?", Bernes / Dzyubin says: "No, an Odessite. When I hear good music, I remember the port, the blue-blue sea." The artistry of the hero is contrasted with Ostap Bender's roguish nature. To complete the new image of an Odessite, Bernes sings a song about Odessa in this film, which was destined to become widely popular: "Scows full of mullet, Kostya brought to Odessa" (Zorkaya 2006: 270). Kostya's bride – fisherwoman Sonia – a popular character at carnivals of *Yumorina*.

"Odessite Mishka" is another song that gained wide popularity during wartime, largely due to its performer, the extremely popular singer Leonid Utesov.[316] In his autobiography, Utesov confesses that one of his first songs dedicated to his native city – "From Odessa Kichman"[317] – appeared when he was "fascinated with thieves' folklore, which, probably, [...] is the brightest manifestation of the Odessa specificity. [...] However – Utesov excuses – it was not only my sin. A patina of romanticization of heroes of the 'underworld' was also observed in literature, for example, in Isaak Babel's stories about Benya Krik, the famous Odessa bandit" (Utesov 1961: 24). Modified during the war, the image of an Odessite (although, perhaps, not the urban specificity itself[318]) demanded that Utesov perform other songs. "During the Great Patriotic War – according to the artist – the lyrical and heroic song 'Odessite Mishka' was aimed at directing Odessa patriotism to the fight against fascism, for the freedom of our entire Motherland" (Ibid.).

[315]The article by R. Aleksandrov – "Listen up!" – cited by: (The Odessan language 2016: 254).
[316]See also: (Tanny 2011: 152-156).
[317]"Kichman" – a prison.
[318]In the first post-war years, Odessa remained an extremely criminogenic city. In the post-Soviet years, this period in Odessa's history was shown in the TV series "Liquidation", which was warmly welcomed among Odessites. See: A. Vainer, E. Kuznetsov. "Liquidation" // The newspaper of the World-Wide Club of Odessites – "World-Wide Odessa News", No. 1 (75), 2010, p. 16.



"To Leonid Utesov from grateful Odessites". The monument to actor and singer. Odessa, September 2012. Photo by S. Huseynova

The main character of the song is a sailor who is in love with his native city like the character of Bernes; this is an Odessite, who does not hang his head in the most difficult times: "You are an Odessite, Mishka, this means / You are not afraid of grief or misfortune. / You are a sailor, Mishka! / The sailor does not cry / And always keeps his spirits high!" The song performed by Utesov is filled with a feeling that the singer calls not Soviet, but "Odessa patriotism" in his memoirs published in 1961. My informant Lena offers her laconic version: "For me, Odessites are people who love Odessa!"[319] Local historian Rostislav Aleksandrov (Aleksandr Rosenboim) emotionally talks about the same urban patriotism, but from his position of a reputable local historian, who has the power to construct the Odessa discourse:

> *"There is also such an expression, which is applicable not to everyone but to the majority: 'there are no former Odessites.' When I hear he is an ex-Odessite. I say, guys, unless he is a bastard, or a scumbag, there are no former Odessites! You see, I cannot explain how it has happened. There are bigger cities, older ones. Yes. But the Odessa syndrome, I would say...* [special] (grinning) *And by the way, Odessa patriotism emerged, the groundwork was laid for it under duke Richelieu. And this is the first two decades of the 19th century. That was then!"* (man, 72 years old, Odessa, September 2012).

[319]Odessa, September 2012. S. Huseynova, Field Notes.

Vladimir, a member of the Club of Odessites in Berlin, in turn, does not doubt that the special "Odessa patriotism" is a category distinguishing the Odessites from residents of other cities:

> "*Other cities also... So to speak, people are patriots of their cities. But not to such an extent. Patriotism of Odessites is expressed in the most, one might say, hyperbolic form. Well, it is such a mentality"* (Vladimir, 64 years old, Berlin, October 2012).

Both in the late 19th century and in the early 21st century, the hyperbolic love of the native city described in Averchenko's story becomes the most important attribute inherent in a 'genuine' Odessite. The well-known song "Near the Black Sea" recorded in 1951 became, according to Utesov, the first and foremost expression of this love, as "an attempt to reproduce the picture of the city merged with the light, happy and cherished memories of childhood and adolescence. The success of this song undoubtedly was ensured by the fact that the author of the lyrics, poet Semyon Kirsanov, and composer Modest Tabachnikov are both also Odessites" (Ibid.: 25). It begins with the words: "There is a city that I see in a dream. / Oh, if you knew how precious it is to me." These words easily resonate with the "Song about Odessa" from Isaac Dunayevsky's operetta "White Acacia" (from the mid-1950s), which became the official anthem of the city: "Your sky and the sea are always with me, Odessa / And you are in my heart and everywhere with me, / Odessa, my hometown!"

According to a member of the Berlin club, "there is a huge number of pieces of music, songs. There is, probably, no city in the world that has as many songs about it as Odessa has" (Vladimir, Berlin, October 2012). In 2014, during the celebration of the 220th anniversary of Odessa, the members of the Berlin club, as usual, sang profusely and loudly in attempts to express their urban 'patriotism'. "To the birthday of Odessa! / The Club of Odessites, a standing toast!" They read poems often paraphrased from famous poets (for example, Pushkin) and sang songs incited by members of the club: "Have Paris forget / its bygone arrogance! / A symbol of progress / And Southern Palmira / Beautiful Odessa, / For us – the capital of the World!" [320]

An "ideal Odessite", as he or she is depicted, by the work of the imagination of both the members of the community and residents of significant other cities, was formed

[320]"Odessa is 220 years old." Berlin, September 19. 09.2012. S. Huseynova, Field Notes.

in the 20th century. This is the construct of an artistic humorist who is in love with his southern city near the Black Sea, who is convinced of his absolute uniqueness, who is fluent in the "Odessa language", who prefers "Odessa cuisine", who knows all its heroes and antiheroes and who never forgets about the "heroic pages" of its history. Representatives of the Southwestern School, who created the "Odessa text" and the urban discourse, put their outstanding literary talent in this groupist construct. By talking about their childhood and adolescence, putting urban myths and anecdotes into prose and verses, drawing 'typical' urban images from friends, acquaintances or neighbours, they created "genuine Odessites".[321]

Having turned into classics, their works largely determined the subjects and content of texts of contemporary authors, who consider themselves to be followers. Discourse and ideal types created within the "Odessa text" transferred to the cinema and turned into scenic images. As a result of effective popularization, representatives of the community received at their disposal an influential construct and discourse of an "ideal Odessite" – which is an important resource for preserving the Odessa tradition, despite all the upheavals and urbizides of the 20th century. Urban habitus of the Odessites socialized during the Soviet era maintains the community of the Odessites in the situation of its dispersal. But this resource is not enough to construct a transnational community. The construct of an "ideal Odessite", a patriot of his/her native city, comes in handy: supporting the belief in the uniqueness of beautiful Odessa, developing the myth of the best city on Earth, and, thus, maintaining the belief in the existence of a solidary and homogeneous community. Within the Odessa discourse and text, such a special city simply cannot help but create people who are like no one else.[322] In the 1990s, most of them left "Odessa Mama", and in the discourse of nostalgia, the native city once again entered a period of losses and damages. But the existence of a timeless construct of an "ideal Odessite" and a persistent myth of "beautiful Odessa" add essential optimism and impetus to the process of constructing a transnational urban community.

[321]There are different assumptions about the prototype of one of the most famous Odessites – Ostap Bender, and other characters of Ilf and Petrov's novels. But it is obvious that these were people who surrounded them in everyday life in Odessa (see: Yanovskaya 1969: 87-106).

[322]I will cite one more quotation from the text of the most influential contemporary Odessa author: "No, there is something in this soil. No, there is something in these straight streets running to the sea, in this blue sky, in this green acacias and plane trees, in these warm evenings [...]. No, there is something in these people who speak so brightly due to borrowing the most important thing from different languages. [...] Yes, there is something in this nervous soil that gives birth to musicians, chess players, artists, singers, con artists and bandits, who so vividly live on both sides of secondary education!" (Zhvanetskiy 2007: 94, 100).

Bakuvians:
"Friendship of Peoples" in the capital of the national Republic

The history of modern Baku only began in the last third of the 19th century, and in the pre-revolutionary period, the city and its residents were given too little time to create their own original literary school. In addition, the city's population was too deeply divided into ethnic and religious groups to jointly participate in shaping the construct of a Russian-speaking Bakuvian and a positive urban myth. Despite the fact that in the 20th century, and especially in the postwar years, the situation has dramatically changed, the *"Baku text"* has never been created, and the construct of a "*genuine Bakuvian*" has not been reflected in canonical literature. This '*southern'* city on the coast of the Caspian Sea has not had its own Babels and Brodskys, capable of glorifying its uniqueness, having the power and authority to create an influential urban discourse and myth.

Moreover, there was not a comparable intellectual community consisting of essayists, journalists and local history enthusiasts to re-think literary images and create popular narratives about the specifics of everyday life, urban habitus and the city's cultural history. In the past, it was difficult for Baku to find resources for unification. In the context of Soviet national policy and post-Soviet nationalism, its pre-revolutionary history could not be reconstructed in terms of the *"Golden Age".* The imperial past did not go well with the popular anti-colonial and national discourses. In turn, the memory of the Soviet period in the history of Baku was significantly marginalized in the context of post-Soviet nationalizing nationalism. The collapse of the USSR, mass emigration, Armenian pogroms, a powerful new wave of nationalization of the history and cultural space of the city, as well as a large-scale architectural reconstruction that swept away many places of memory, had profound and destructive effects on the Russian-speaking community of Bakuvians. As a result, the most influential of urban myths and constructs of the "ideal Bakuvian" are rarely associated with the modern city.

Both in the post-war years of the emergence and prosperity of the urban community and in the situation of its transnationalization, the main resource facilitating the preservation of the community is found in the memory of everyday life and personal nostalgic memories of the Bakuvians. In the absence of a "Baku text", a developed local historical discourse, or a unique cultural and architectural landscape, these memories are inevitably painted in much more pessimistic and nostalgic shades than in the case of Odessites or Petersburgers. However, the myth of Baku is still alive. Many Bakuvians

still consider themselves to be a part of the Russian-speaking urban community, and the missing literary images and local historical narratives were partially compensated by other resources. How and when did Baku turn into a special city capable of producing people who were unlike any other – Bakuvians? In the late 19th – early 20th centuries, many well-known Russian (and not only) writers and poets visited the "capital of oil production", but they did not write heartfelt verses about Baku after their visits. The dusty center of the Russian Empire's oil industry left a contradictory aftertaste. Among the very few benevolent verses, perhaps one can recall Sergey Yesenin's poems dated from the early Soviet years: "Goodbye Baku! The Turkic sky, goodbye! / The blood turns cold, and I am getting wicker. / But I'll bring as happiness in mind / The waves of the Caspian Sea and Balakhany in May" (1925).

Other authors were far less friendly. In the early Soviet years, Vladimir Mayakovsky, who visited Baku three times, created a very ambiguous image of the city of oil production:

> "Baku / Inky oil streams. / Baku / Flat roof houses. / Hook-nosed people. / Baku. / Nobody settles for fun. / Baku. / A grease spot on the jacket of the world. / Baku. / A tank full of mud, but you / Attract me more / than Tibet attracts a dervish" (1923). For Mayakovsky, Baku is an unattractive place, which does not inspire him with any warm sentiments. The poet considers the city to be special only as the center of oil production that is the most important for the survival of the USSR. "In puddles and mud covered the coast, / flat-roofed Baku is messing around. / Sandy soil injures trees, / the northeast wind shakes and breaks twigs. / On all the boulevards below the Maiden Tower, / there are hardly eighteen leaves. / Stand and pull oil out of the sand – boredom!" (1927).[323]

It is difficult to imagine that such an unattractive image of Baku contributed to the birth of "urban patriotism", as it happened in St Petersburg and Odessa in the late 19th – early 20th century. Oil-soaked soil, dusty, greenless streets and squares were not perceived by either local or visiting intellectuals as a certain unique urban space destined to produce special people. However, in the later (mostly post-war) Soviet years, when Baku was already habitually perceived not only as an "outpost of socialism in the East" but also as the most international city of the Soviet Union and the capital of the Azerbaijan SSR, it was still visited by numerous (and not only Soviet) writers and poets. Most often,

[323]Here and elsewhere verses are cited by the collection "I fell in love with Azerbaijan". See: (Guliyev 1980)

they arrived in the capital of the Transcaucasian republic as an “airlifted force” landing to attend various jubilees and big celebrations. This format presupposed the obligatory glorification of the city as an industrial and cultural center of the socialist, hospitable “southern and sunny” republic, which always warmly welcomed numerous guests. Their task was greatly facilitated by the radical transformation of the city’s socio-cultural space. By the 1960s, the “capital of oil workers” had experienced large-scale urban beautification, architectural reconstruction and was filled with numerous memorials and places of memory; recreation zones appeared in its suburbs, and already, new Baku hardly resembled the city of the 1920s.

One of the most vivid examples of the Soviet odic genre can be found in the works of Robert Rozhdestvensky, one of the most brilliant poets of the ‘Sixtiers’. In his poem “Thank you!”, there is a scene in which “one friend” does not understand the sympathy shown by the poet towards Baku. The poet’s opponent is represented by an experienced traveler who had visited Japan, the Red Sea, the Rhine Coast and he considers “excitement about Baku to be ridiculous”. But Rozhdestvensky declares categorically: “You have not seen Baku yet! / If you did not see Baku / What have you seen? What?” Such ‘odes’ dedicated to Baku, mostly written in verse and in the style of an op-ed and essay, were produced by many writers after their visits to Baku: Pavel Antokolsky, Rasul Gamzatov, Jambul Jabaev, Ilhami Emin, Miguel Barnod, etc. Most of these works have long been forgotten or they are familiar only to specialists. However, well-known Soviet authors who made short visits to the city made a significant contribution to the creation of the image of “beautiful Baku”, a city that can only be admired, and thus supported the emergence of “urban patriotism”.

The desire to gain recognition from prominent figures of other significant cities, especially Muscovites and Leningraders, has always been relevant for the residents of the city located on the “southeastern” periphery. The myth of beautiful sunny coastal Baku inhabited by heroic oil workers and hospitable southerners, and the city of victorious internationalism, was constructed only by the 1950s-1960s. In the absence of influential writers, the mission of adopting and spreading the myth widely was undertaken by pop singers. Two Soviet singers who represented the Azerbaijan SSR in the post-war years and were widely known throughout the Soviet Union – Rashid Behbudov (1915-1989) and Muslim Magomaev (1942-2008) – played a key role in popularization of the Baku myth.

Behbudov performed at least a dozen songs with self-explanatory titles: “A Song about Baku” (“My beautiful city, sunny Baku, / You became the best song in my lifetime.

/ [...] Oh, charming city, I am proud of you! / Grow up and get stronger, blossom and sing"); "Native Baku" ("Baku, I know no city sweeter in this world / You are the city of beauty, glory and dreams / My wealth is you, my dear Baku"); "My old friend – Baku" ("To all the pearls of the sea / Add another one"); "The March of Oil Workers of the Caspian Sea" ("Baku, get up with rows of derricks, / Spread over with palaces! / With great overwhelming love to you / The heart of a Bakuvian is filled!"); "In this city of blinding lights" ("In this city of dear friends, / I learned to live and be friends. / How can I not love Baku?") and others.[324]

The star of the Soviet-era music, Muslim Magomayev, who had a fine appearance and was extremely popular in the 1960s and 70s, continued to multiply paeans of praise dedicated to the capital of the Azerbaijan SSR: "The Baku Autumn" (The city seems like / An overgrown park); "Baku at Night" (My city, with you / I'm forever in love / [...] And I cannot live a day without you"); "My city – Baku" (At night, the stars turn pale / Because of your lights."/ And this sky is the only one for me, / There is no better land!"); "A Song about Baku" ("Your honor and glory /I sacredly guard/ And I'm rightly proud / of you, Baku!"), etc.[325] In the context of the urban myth which is most fully and hyperbolically expressed in the songs about Baku, the post-war years saw the formation of a community of Bakuvians, for whom love of their native city becomes mandatory.

However, the resources for the development of "urban patriotism" still remain very scarce when compared with St Petersburg and Odessa. In the context of Soviet national policy, the production of Azerbaijani national culture was supported. Writers and poets, composers and cinematographers who inhabited the city in the 20th century worked on the construction of myths national in form and socialist in substance. The *imagined community* of Russian-speaking Bakuvians remained on the sidelines of the large-scale social realistic cultural construction that unfolded in Soviet Azerbaijan. As a result, the Bakuvians still do not have reputable literary texts, to which they could refer in search of ideal types of representatives of the community. By the mid-1980s, when the urban environment was prepared for the emergence of its own original authors, the city entered a period of lingering, tragic transformations. One of the results of which was the rapid transnationalization of the Russian-speaking community of Bakuvians.

Except for Natig Rasulzade, who published his first works in the late Soviet years, all interesting authors reproducing in their texts concerning everyday life of Baku in the

[324]See: Songs performed by Rashid Behbudov, http://www.sovmusic.ru/person_list.php?idperson=94
[325]See: The creative heritage of Muslim Magomayev, http://www.muslim-magomaev.ru/mp3-fajly/polnyj-spisok-pesen/

last decades of the Soviet Union came into spotlight after their authors had already left the city. In Alexander Goldstein's novel *Remember Famagusta* or in Afanasiy Mamedov's story "Back to Khazr", the city and its everyday life are shown to be far less rosy than in the motivational songs performed by Behbudov and Magomayev[326] or in the verses of Antakolsky and Rozhdestvensky. In the works by Goldstein and Mammadov, Baku is inhabited by completely different people and many of them are very conservative; the population is split into ethnic communities; it is inundated with migrants from rural regions, and rapidly loses its 'international' aura[327] in the context of the Karabakh conflict. These works are more known outside of Baku than internally.

The novel *Ali and Nino* gained wide popularity in Baku in the post-Soviet years. Its author was Lev Nusimbaum, an ethnic Jew who left the city with his family at the age of 15-16 to flee the Bolsheviks and was later published under the pseudonym Kurban Said. Events in the novel unfold in the early 20th century. The work "had been originally published in German in 1937 and was revived in translation in the seventies as a minor classic" (Reiss 1999: ix). The collapse of the Soviet Union gave the Bakuvians the opportunity to get acquainted with the novel, which became very popular at the time of de-sovietization, the domination of post-Soviet nationalizing nationalism and the conflict with Armenia. The main positive character is Ali Khan, a Muslim and Turkic nationalist, who heroically perishes in the battle with the Bolsheviks. The main anti-hero is treacherous Armenian Melik Nahararyan, who tried to kidnap Ali Khan's beloved and died by his hand. The main storyline focuses on the preservation of the 'eastern' and national identity in the era of colonialism and Europeanization.

Nusimbaum's novel acquired the status of a national classic in post-Soviet Azerbaijan. According to the version generally accepted in the republic, its author was not the Baku Jew – Nusimbaum, but the Azerbaijani – Yusif Vezir Chemenzemenli. Artistic prose as a genre was not popular before the era of socialist realism in Muslim Azerbaijan, and, in fact, *Ali and Nino* is the only work capable of filling this niche. Imperial Baku is shown in the novel as a city with a still undetermined 'civilizational' identity. 'East' and 'West' are simultaneously intertwined and confront each other in the space of the city. Ali Khan loving Nino, who is a Christian from Georgia, is trying to find balance in a city torn apart by contradictory civilizational projects and flooded by

[326]Not in all cases, but for the most part, the authors of the lyrics of the songs they performed were Azerbaijani poets.
[327]See: (Rasulzade 1990; Goldstein 2004; Mamedov 2004).

newcomers. He considers himself and his own kind to be the true masters of the city and his only true patriots:

> "'Nino,' Ali asks the beloved, 'do not you like our city? Do you want to move to Tiflis?' 'Thank you, Ali Khan, you are very attentive, we will live in Baku.' 'In my opinion, there is no better city in the world than Baku.' 'That's how it is? But how many cities have you seen?' 'Not many, but if you wish, we will go on a trip around the world.' 'Of course, you'll immediately miss the ancient Fortress [...].' 'I love my homeland, Nino, I love every single stone, every grain of sand.' 'I know, Ali. It is amazing to love Baku so much. For newcomers, it's just a hot, dusty city fully impregnated with oil.' 'That's right, because they are strangers...'" (Said 1973: 105).

Tom Reiss, the biographer of the author of the novel, tells about the effect produced by this novel on a modern Russian-speaking intellectual – Bakuvian – through the example of well-known local history enthusiast Fuad Akhundov. When he showed Reiss around old Baku, "he was quoting, and the passage was from Ali and Nino" (Reiss 1999: xiii). Reiss relays Akhundov's attempts to convey the feelings the novel awakens in him: "'Kurban Said is like my lifeline. Without him, I would be trapped here in my own city and not really be able to feel or understand the beauty and yet the tragic forces that are beneath my very nose.' Fuad's obsession with Ali and Nino," continues Reiss, "was shared by many people in Baku. Educated Azeris I met seemed to consider it their national novel, telling me that they could show me the street, square, schoolhouse where almost every scene had taken place" (Reiss 1999: xiv).

The interest in Baku's past increased in the post-Soviet years and the new "urban patriotism" could only draw on resources for its development in the texts of historians and local lore specialists. But there are practically none of them. Unlike Petersburg and Odessa, there has never been any influential community of experts on the urban past in Baku. Perhaps one of the reasons can be attributed to the fact that the formation of a local historical school coincided with the implementation of Soviet national policy, and professionals were involved in the construction of the national narrative. In the Soviet years, local history enthusiasts outside this context never emerged. Perhaps, because Baku did not have a "brilliant imperial past", which would compel the address or justification of the uniqueness of the modern urban space and the originality of the community that inhabited it.

The pre-revolutionary past saw numerous cruel and bloody conflicts, which were not discursively popular in the city of victorious internationalism. Regarding the imperial past, it is now difficult to find figures equally important for all Bakuvians, around which it would be possible to create local historical narratives. Post-Soviet researchers and media are focused mainly on representatives of the Turkic-Muslim urban elite. To a lesser extent, on ethnic Germans or Poles who lived in Baku in the pre-Soviet period. However, they almost completely ignore the huge facet of the city's history associated with the Baku Armenians or Georgians.

Among the few and most interesting narratives, one can recall the book of historical essays by professional geologist and writer Manaf Suleymanov – *The Days of the Past,* dedicated to imperial Baku in the period after the oil boom, and before its Sovietization. Beside it, there are a few memoirs and several works on the history of Baku's architecture.[328] In addition, a series of about two dozen documentary films – *Baku Secrets*, directed by local history enthusiast Fuad Akhundov.[329] For the most part, these films contain interesting information about prominent representatives of the Turkic-Muslim pre-revolutionary urban elite who did not play a dominant role in Baku.

"Our Baku" website, which was developed by the Bakuvians who emigrated to Germany and created a non-profit organization with the same name, is also trying to fill an empty niche.[330] But here, again, there are not enough resources to answer many questions and make a significant contribution to the discourse of the uniqueness of Baku and its urban community. The memory of the everyday life of the city in the 1950s-1970s, at the time of the "golden age" of the imagined community of Bakuvians, is available, for the most part, only in the form of two collections of small and very heterogeneous essays – memoirs collected by Bahram Bagirzade, one of the most notable members of the *KVN* team "Guys from Baku".[331]

The absence of reputable sources becomes a serious obstacle to the construction of the urban discourse and myth of the unique imaginary community of Bakuvians. How do Bakuvians see Baku in this situation and how do they describe the specificity of the urban habitus and the imaginary community? I'll start with the version of Fuad Akhundov, a local historian repeatedly mentioned here, which he kindly stated in his interview:

[328]See: (Bretanitsky 1970; Suleymanov 1990; Fatullayev-Figarov1998; Banin 2006).
[329]See: Fuad Akhundov and his TV program "The Baku Secrets", https://www.baku.ru/blg-list.php?id=20929&cmm_id=136
[330]Our Baku. History of Baku and Bakuvians, https://www.ourbaku.com/index.php/Kontakte
[331]This is about the second KVN team with this name, who became the champion of the 1992 contest. See: (Bagirzadeh 2012; Bagirzadeh 2013)

"*Pre-revolutionary Baku is not a melting pot. It is not a cauldron. It is a patchwork quilt where, in principle, ethnic communities lived quite apart. [...] A parallel coexistence of different cultures.* [...] *But, nevertheless, they got along together somehow. Every group had its own niche, both in business and in everyday life. The Soviet power changed everything. And it changed quite simply and very harshly. On the one hand, the demolition of temples, the fight against religion.* [...] *They made a decision on secularization of the divorce process. Legal barriers to mixing of blood and inter-ethnic marriages were removed. Therefore, the Soviet period was characterized by a huge number of mixed marriages. Notably, these were marriages between, for the most part, representatives of the traditionally separate communities. For example, Armenians and Azerbaijanis. Oddly enough, paradoxically, the strongest and most interesting bonds were created between Azerbaijani men (!), as a rule, and Armenian women. Of course, there were marriages between Azerbaijanis and Russians. There were quite a lot of mixed marriages between Jews and other ethnic groups*. [...] *After one or two generations, the concept of a Bakuvian was already supranational. Because, as a rule, a Bakuvian is a man of mixed bloods.* [Akhundov himself is also from a mixed family]. *Outwardly, I was often mistaken for a Jew, because teachers were mostly Jews. That is, you see, such a very interesting – as they said in Soviet times – new historical community of people was being created. In Soviet times, this community was represented by the Soviet people. Ironically, this idea of a new historical community of people was realized in Baku. What is more, it was realized quite naturally, painlessly and even interestingly.* [...] *Due to mass mixing of blood and the creation of such a peculiar subculture of a Bakuvian. When ethnicity receded into the background, and some values, some customs, some… came to the fore. I do not know...* [for example] *From lunch in Intourist*[332] *through a session at the cinema. A communication algorithm was being developed because people came there not only to watch a movie or to eat, but this was an element of the communication process. It was an element of some urban culture [...] Religion was banned. It, in fact, was not needed by anyone, you see. And people generated some rituals around certain places that became landmarks"* (man, 48 years old, Baku, August 2016).

[332]A popular restaurant located in a hotel for foreign tourists. Many Bakuvians reminisce about breakfasts and dinners in Intourist.

In this version, the concept of "blood mixing" is presented as the basic practice of constructing an imaginary urban community. In ethnically mixed families, according to Akhundov, unique people were inevitably born. Their distinction was based on indifference to the ethnicity of classmates, friends, neighbours and even close relatives. Akhundov proposes to consider the community of Bakuvians as an example of the successful implementation of the policy of constructing the "Soviet people". The 'success' of the ideological project is reflected in the powerful overcoming of ethnonational borders. Akhundov does not ask himself why, in this context, the city sees the formation of an unplanned urban community, whose members prefer to talk about themselves as Bakuvians and not as representatives of the "Soviet people". Thus, according to Akhundov, in his everyday life, a "genuine Bakuvian" is indifferent to ethnonational and religious differences, which largely determine his urban habitus. On the one hand, the absolute majority of Bakuvians, at least, with whom I had a chance to communicate with, share this view. On the other hand, many people recall that the importance of ethnic boundaries, and group identities remained potent even in the Soviet years.

> *"This is internationalism... I would not say that it was somehow cultivated. This was self-evident* [...]. *Probably, the Bakuvians are quite open people. And people who are cosmopolitan on the one hand, [but] they are also nationalists. This is a combination of both. This is an interesting feature of the Bakuvians. But it exists. And there is another such feature: Bakuvians can find a friend in any situation. In other words, if you are a Bakuvian, you will always find an insider. Or he or she will be your kinsman, or neighbour, or something else. And that is inherent in the Bakuvians, despite the fact that millions of people live in the city. But they find somehow, they seek out, sniff each other out* [...]. *In this sense, social networks also played their role, because if earlier everything was verbally transmitted, now it is realized through social networks. That is, a certain new wave of this has spread. They stick together. This is probably a certain characteristic feature. I can't put it into words. The Bakuvians are a nation, how they call it. I do not know it. I don't quite understand it. When the Bakuvians are portrayed as a separate community of people. But, nevertheless, it leaves a certain mark probably. Besides, the city's multiethnicity. Not one ethnicity, but multiethnicity. It also leaves its mark.* [...] *In general, ethnicity for the Bakuvians has never made any difference, I think so. But of course, it has changed after certain events.* [...]

Well, as for the modern city, of course, there is no such multiethnicity anymore. For genuine native Bakuvians, it still does not matter to which ethnic group you belong. [...] *There has been a lot of talk about the common ground between the Odessites and Bakuvians. Well, the Odessites, above all, are characterized by their humor and a certain Jewish inclination. And the cities are similar too. Very similar. When I first came to Odessa, I thought it was Baku. Of course, now it is difficult to compare them as Baku has changed a lot. But, nevertheless, old Baku is pretty much like Odessa. And it is also a seaside city. Perhaps, the climate has left an imprint on people. There is something inexplicable in this. Although I do not know. Also, speaking in Russian language. That's it. Another distinctive feature. Most of the old Bakuvians are Russian-speaking"* (Irada, woman, 57 years old, Berlin, October 2013).

The project of creating the Soviet people was borne of contradictory practices. The Soviet people, like their cultures, had to remain national in form and socialist in content. Now, it is difficult to assess the degree of impact of the propaganda of internationalism on interethnic relations in Soviet Baku. How much faith was had in the "bright future", which the interviewee (I.) mentions in her interview, determined the behavior of the Bakuvians. But it can be assumed that the Soviet power ousted interethnic conflicts from public space by forcing all peoples to play by ubiquitous rules. At the same time, national identities always remained significant and were described in terms of primordialism. In this interview, an essentialist geographic concept mentioned in interviews with Odessites and Petersburgers emerges again: a place and climate of living determines the type of a person.

The Soviet people had to make friends but not forget that they were representatives of different peoples, and the Baku myth of 'invisibility' of ethnic differences was not an integral part of the Soviet ideology. The authorities, on the contrary, strictly controlled and established ethno-national borders and identities. The unwillingness of the Bakuvians to recognize the importance of ethnic identities, and the pointed refusal to take them into account in everyday life, constructed an imaginary urban community that was unplanned by official ideology. In addition, the construct of *Bakinskost* [being a Bakuvian] also allowed cultivation of the 'supranational' uniqueness of the urban community amid a homogenizing Soviet project, which was aimed, among other things, at Russification. As I stressed, "we, of course, were brought up on Russian culture." Such upbringing

presupposed, first of all, proficiency in Russian. But in these circumstances, Bakuvians did not turn into Russians.

> *"Ninety-nine percent of people all spoke Russian. Moreover, among the forward-thinking young people, there was a fashion in transport, for example, two girls are sitting with people around them. Boys talked in such a way: third of the sentence in Russian, two words in Azerbaijani in the middle and finally Russian again. It was a fashion for some reason. It was a shame not to know Russian. Nobody would talk to you. Especially, if you want to pick up a girl! Feh! First of all!* [It was notable] *that guys were different from remote villages and districts, but first of all they tried to learn Russian"* (Lev, man, 66 years, Baku, July 2015).

Russian was not only the language of everyday communication but also a status marker, which allowed quick identification of a Bakuvian. Among other things, thanks to its special intonation and synthesis with Azerbaijani words. In addition, in the case of Baku, proficiency in Russian emphasized the gap between the Bakuvians and Azerbaijani-speaking rural periphery to a much greater extent than in Odessa. Thus, if we try to summarize Bakuvians' ideas about the urban habitus of a representative of the community, this person will be necessarily Russian-speaking, although speaking the language with a special intonation and sometimes using Azerbaijani words. The "genuine Bakuvian" should be indifferent to ethnic differences and open and receptive to a wide range of cultural practices and norms. Unlike a "snob from Petersburg", a Bakuvian is an easy-going kind of person, who easily establishes relations with strangers. This type of an "ideal Bakuvian" existing in the memories of members of the community, in their opinion, is rarely found in modern Baku.

According to the point of view that dominated in the post-Soviet period, the Baku community remains in the past and its traces live their last days. According to Akhundov, the grotesque reflection of this feeling of "certain fatality", and even degradation of the community, can be found in Farid Afshar's story. Events unfold in the restaurant and the adjacent bar. The sequence of the story's plot is built around a prolonged feast, with detailed descriptions of numerous dishes and drinks. The heroes of the story are three Bakuvian intellectuals, whose parents held high posts and were members of prestigious social niches in the Soviet years. Being pretty drunk, the 45-year-old Bakuvian leaves a generous dinner and goes down to the bar with a friend, where both meet with their old acquaintance. The conversation of friends, who have moved to another table with snacks

and vodka, reveals the specifics of the modern Baku habitus, as Afshar sees it. The old acquaintance is greeted with the phrase "You are my dear!" which, according to the author, "is a trademark, a sort of label of a 'city-type guy', a bohemian Bakuvian, which can help him easily recognize his fellow anywhere in the world." The conversation of the three friends reveals all the current problems of the urban community, the most important among which is that there are "so few" of Bakuvians "left" in Baku itself. Mutual friends are scattered around the world. Somebody is in New York, somebody is in Israel. All that is left for a chance encounter of friends is to raise toasts "for our native Baku" and Bakuvians, and to remember that "there is such a nation - Bakuvians!"

The conversation is imbued with a sense of nostalgia about times since-past and the youth left in the past. Now the city has been flooded with people from the rural periphery: "All good places have been occupied for a long time by boneheads from the provinces. They, unscrupulous intruders, came in large numbers, and now we, the city guys, were left out in the cold." Ultimately, the central character falls asleep at the table and dies of a blood attack. Having found himself in the Otherworld, he enters into a discussion with Charon and asks him whether he will go to heaven or hell. Charon calms Samir down: "'What terrible things have you done in your life except for parasitic lifestyle, drunkenness, petty thefts and frauds, and a couple of hooligan acts in youth?' 'Nothing. I just ate and drank at my leisure.'" As a result, the hero of the story is sent to the Pluto Restaurant, "where he will eat and drink to the end of time and will never be full." There he "will find a lot of people of his own height – old city-type guys, Bakuvians."[333] Afshar's story, replete with bitter irony, tells of the inability of the Baku community to survive the tough times they have suddenly faced. All that is left of the old way of life is a generous feast, where they can, while drinking and eating delicious snacks, recall the glorious old days of the "golden age" left in the Soviet past.

However, in the situation of dispersion, there is another possibility for preserving networks and reconstructing a comfortable social space. According to Akhundov, "now the concept of a Bakuvian exists more outside of Baku." Similar, in many ways, to the 'concept' of an Odessite or even a Leningrader / Petersburger. Having left their cities, members of these communities brought with them cherished symbols recalling their native cities and habitual lifestyles. They not only aspire to reproduce the habitual atmosphere in their apartments but also to build city clubs – public spaces, whose atmosphere should remind them of their native cities.

[333]F. Afshar. Bakuvians visiting Pluto // Tamga. Literary Almanac, No. 1, 2012, p. 10-18.

Club practices of visually representing hometowns, through their recognizable symbols, have helped to maintain myths and discourses of community solidarity in the situation of their dispersion. Yet, the resources available to different urban communities are not the same. The sets of recognized visual symbols that remind Petersburgers and Odessites of their hometowns are much richer and more diverse than those available to Bakuvians. The vast majority of them refer to the "*golden age*" in the history of St Petersburg and Odessa. Mostly, these are recognizable characters, monuments dedicated to them and significant architectural monuments related to the imperial past. As late as the Soviet period, many key symbols of the city on the Neva River were widely known all over the Union. Most of those that are dear to Odessites are only well known to natives of the *Southern Palmyra.*

The Baku imperial period, being much shorter, did not leave behind symbols and images that were equally significant to and recognized by a majority of community members. In the pre-revolutionary period, not a single sculptural monument appeared in Baku. Unlike Petersburg and Odessa, founding fathers or mothers of the city are unknown, as is the date of Baku's foundation. Charismatic mayors, independent and approved by all members of the community, did not appear in the history of the city until now.[334] Thus, it is very difficult, if not impossible, to represent the history of Baku by persons. The most interesting, architecturally *designed* religious buildings were destroyed in the first decades of the USSR. Less significant surviving ones were not reconstructed into museums. And in general, there are no large museums in the city that can give Baku an image of a well-known cultural center.[335] Only the old "Maiden Tower" remains as a generally accepted architectural symbol in demand in transnational networks. But in modern Baku, this medieval structure has long ago yielded its symbolic positions to the

[334]As, for example, in the case of the purely positive images of the Duke de Richelieu created by local historians, in the Odessa period of 1803-1814. ("There was never a more esteemed figure in Odessa", (Gubar 2014: 23-25)). Or the mayor Gregory Marazli who *administered* Odessa in the period from 1878 to 1895. ("His popularity as the largest millionaire in the city could compete only with his generous charity.") See: Reshetov S., Izhik L., City Head of Odessa G. G. Marazli (1831-1907) and his kinship // Literary Almanac "Deribasovskaya - Rishelievskaya", No. 31, 2007, pp. 6-31. In Baku, the most popular character is the Soviet functionary Alish Lemberanskiy. His reception, even at the time of his administration, was completely different. He had no chance of becoming a Richelieu or Marazli to Baku. ("The best mayor of Baku Alish Limberanskiy", https://www.trend.az/life/socium/1468480.html)

[335]Only The Museum of Carpets was opened in a small "Lezgin" mosque in the Old City of Baku.

new "Flame Towers" or the Heydar Aliyev Center, created by the famous architect Zaha Hadid.

Of course, not only visual symbols and narratives are important. The construction of solidarity is also served by music and common feasts, referring already to the Soviet experience and its sites of memory. These rituals and cultural elements are not distinct from visual narratives, but are, rather, complementary. For instance, the showcase of well-known monumental images at club evenings serve to create an atmosphere of transference in time and space. Such visual reminders facilitate a feeling *of closeness* to their hometown, even while remaining in Berlin – constantly cultivating faith in the uniqueness of their hometown. Posters or photographs reminiscent of their hometown, as well as various evenings and events, mark the spaces of clubs. Not only Odessites or Petersburgers, but also their guests, immediately understood which club had organized the event once they were inside its hall, in the atmosphere of whichever city they were transferred to.

The very activity of the clubs of Leningraders and Odessites is largely built on amateur artistic performance and directly depends on the level of creativity, as well as the personal interest, of all permanent members. Symbols and visual narratives reminiscent of their hometowns are coordinated, selected and created by members of the clubs themselves. As a result, the design of the events and their themes are constantly referring to the myths of the uniqueness of their hometowns and serve as a reminder of the urban habitus that distinguishes the special quality of Leningraders, Odessites or Bakuvians.

> "All the dearest to me are the natives of the city on the Neva - always friendly, nice, intelligent and modest, / ladies with hats and veils, old men wearing their hats at a jaunty angle, / bearded [s borodkoy klinishkom], gray, handsome, saints. / Petersburgers, Petrograders, native Leningraders! You are the soul of the city on the Neva, you are Petersburg's beauty".[336]

> "Kievers, Dnepropetrovskers, Muscovites/, Bakuvians, Petersburgers, Lvovians – live in Berlin, / and all are 'lawyers' and 'doctors'./ And among this mosaic

[336] Actress Elena Lurie, being the artistic director of all city clubs in 2015, recited these poems at the Jubilee party dedicated to the 10th anniversary of the founding of the Berlin Club of Leningraders. "The script of the anniversary evening." S. Huseynova, Field Notes (May 2015, Berlin). The author of the poems is Marina Moshkova, and Lurie slightly paraphrased them. In the original, Moshkova laments that the described type of "native Leningrader" which is disappearing in St Petersburg. Lurie, on the contrary, transparently hints at the members of the Berlin club, where this "type" dominates. However, even Moshkova ends her work on an optimistic note: "Here their children grew up, entered *into maturity*, / And *lo and behold*, the lovely features dear to heart could be seen: / the same proud *posture,* the same kind eyes, / their gold soul shines with inner light". See: Moshkova M. (2014), Leningraders, https://www.stihi.ru/2014/12/01/10475

mass / It calls you and beckons / The person of a not very clear race, / his nationality – Odessite".[337]

"In general, I must say that our ["Baku Club"] differs from all organizations [founded by migrants from Azerbaijan], to put it mildly, in the intelligentsia, [its emphasis on] intellect. You understand who[338] goes there".[339] The choice of symbols can also be determined by the politics pursued by urban clubs based in St Petersburg and Odessa. *The Worldwide Club of Petersburgers* chose for its primary and everlasting icon , after its "many reduplications", the portrait of Peter the Great (1717) by the Dutch painter Carl de Moor.[340] This well-known image of the first Russian emperor, the founder of St Petersburg, is connected with the *emblem* of the city created in Peter's times. According to the chairwoman of the board of *The Worldwide Club of Petersburgers* Valentina Orlova:

> "*It was in 1991. It was suggested by one of our St Petersburg designers. When we began to think which emblem to choose, there were lots of offers. He suggested something with Peter and the city. Among many variations, Tolstoi*[341] *and I chose this option* [ie., the current one], *and registered it. But at the end of the 1990s, the law was issued that prohibited all public organizations to use the emblem of the city. And we fought for a year, so that we could be allowed an exception.* [...] *And they did not allow us to re-register* [the emblem]. *They said that we violated a law. We have been trying to solve this problem for a year and finally, they allowed. And we have united the idea of Peter's city with the idea of modern Petersburg and we wear this emblem proudly*" (Valentina Orlova, woman, 66 years old, St Petersburg, January 2014).

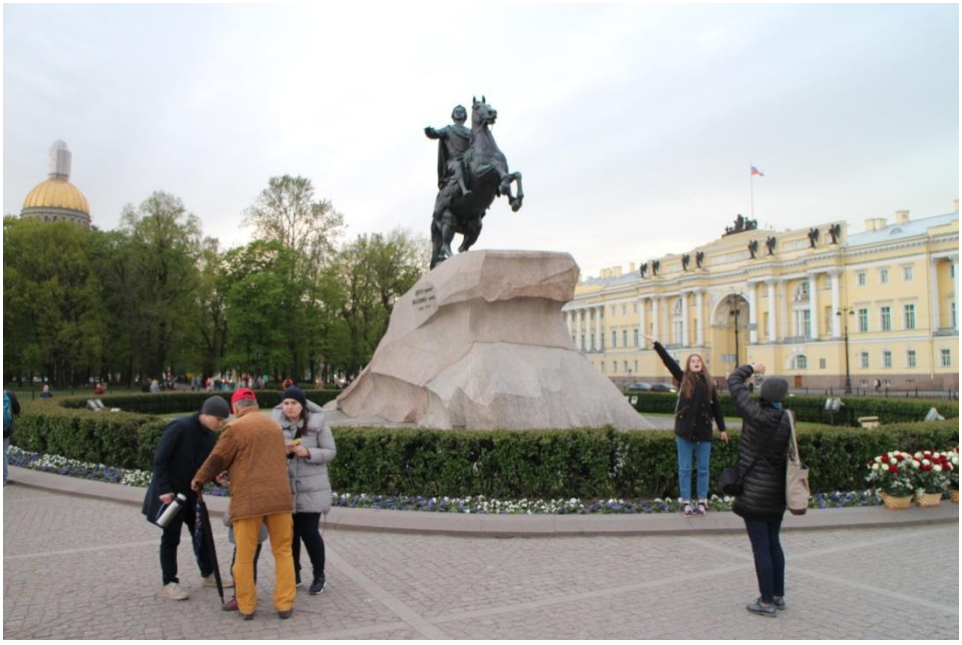
On the official poster, the emblem of *the Worldwide Club* is accompanied by the words of its current President Mikhail Piotrovsky: "By loving St Petersburg to save the soul of the city ..." (*Ljubov'ju k Peterburgu sberech' dushu goroda...*). Although the aim of the Berlin club is different – an independent organization for preservation of the

[337] Written by members of the "Berlin Club of Odessites", poems adapting the song "Shalandy, polnye kefali" (from the film *Two Soldiers*, 1943) were performed at the evening dedicated to "220 years of Odessa". Berlin, September 19, 2012. S. Huseynova, Field Notes.
[338] That is, in diaspora organizations created primarily by non Bakuvians.
[339] The quote belongs to Elmira Ashrafova, the chairwoman of the "Berlin Club of Baku" (woman, 68 years old, Berlin, October 2017). S. Huseynova, Field Notes.
[340] See: (Kostjuk 2013: 198-200).
[341] Nikita Tolstoi, Professor at the St Petersburg University, one of the founders of the club and its first president. The son of well-known writer Aleksei Tolstoi, the author of a novel about Peter the Great.

community in emigration – this does not prohibit a similar borrowing of the recognizable image of Peter the Great. Being outside the legal field of the Russian Federation, the immigrant community freely uses the same city emblem with the inscription: "The Berlin Club of Leningraders". The most famous image of Peter the Great – the Bronze Horseman – was chosen for the club's picture. This monument has a special history, which reveals a lot about the influence of the cultural capital, which extends far beyond the local urban context.

The Bronze Horseman, created by the French sculptor Etienne Falcone, became the first sculptural political monument established in urban public space in the territory of the Russian Empire. Dedicated to the 200th anniversary of the founding of St Petersburg, writer and journalist Vasily Avseenko noted that the city on the Neva must credit the appearance of "the most famous of the monuments that adorn it - the equestrian statue of the creator of the new capital and the transformer of Russia" to "the artistic taste of Catherine". A century later, the historian Yevgeny Anisimov, agreeing with this assessment, stresses that the Bronze Horseman was "the most important monument of Catherine's epoch", becoming the symbol of imperial Petersburg "immediately and for the ages". The grandiose monument was inaugurated in 1782.[342]

[342]See more: (Avseenko 1903: 151-155; Gordin 2004; 304-307; Anisimov 2008: 360-362)



"The Bronze Horseman". 27 May – "the City Day".
St.Petersburg, 2017. Photo by S. Huseynova

The character chosen for the monument, in any case, was destined to fame. But the real glory to Falcone's creation came with Pushkin's poem "The Bronze Horseman" ("Mednyi Vsadnik"). In this work, well-known to any citizen of the USSR socialized in the Soviet era, and, especially to Leningraders, the greatest Russian poet not only admires "Peter's great creation", but also turns the monument into an independent hero. The spirit of Peter comes to life, both in the city itself and in his sculptural image. Quotations from Pushkin's poem can often be heard at the events of the "Berlin Club of the Leningraders" *on different and* seemingly not always appropriate, occasions. For example, the lecture of a Leningrad native on Haifa[343] (the city in Israel), may begin in a somewhat contradictory manner with an allusion to the *Northern Palmyra*. The lecturer claimed that each city has its own zest that distinguishes it in the sense of architecture and landscape. And, of course, the best example is Leningrad. The city whose construction site was not chosen by Peter the Great by accident. The speaker found the argument in familiar lines from "The Bronze Horseman": "On a deserted, wave-swept shore, / He stood – in his mind great thoughts grow – / And gazed afar. The northern river / Sped on its wide course him before;" ("Na beregu pustynnyh voln/ Stojal on, dum velikih poln,/ I vdal' gljadel. Pred nim shiroko/ Reka neslasja;")[344]. Whatever the theme of the club evening, and often it is about Israel,

[343] Activists of the club came up with a series of thematic evenings dedicated to various cities in Israel.
[344] Before going on to the theme of the evening, the lecturer was still discussing for some time the peculiarities of the Northern capital, founded by the river and on the islands, having time to remember Brodsky's poems: "*Neither country nor churchyard will I choose/ I'll come to Vasilevsky Island to die" (*Ni

and various subjects from Jewish history or religion, eventually the gathered always come to talk about their hometown and personal memories of life in it.

"The Bronze Horseman", as an image associated with the city on the Neva, was widely replicated in the Soviet period. Since the 1960s, the monument has become the emblem of the "Lenfilm" studio, which produced and distributed many popular Soviet films (Pozdnyakov, 2014). On this emblem, the image of the founder of Petersburg and the first Russian emperor, is seemingly and paradoxically combined with the myth of the city of three revolutions and the main Soviet leader, Vladimir Lenin. Postcards, stamps and badges, especially those published for the 250th anniversary of Leningrad, spread throughout the country and, in turn, made this image more recognizable. In the Soviet years, Leningrad became one of the most attractive cities for tourists in Russia, and a visit to the Bronze Horseman turned into an obligatory ritual.

Club evening "the Decembrist Poets of St Petersburg".
Berlin Club of Leningraders, Berlin, February 2011. Photo by S. Huseynova

strany, ni pogosta ne hochu vybirat'./ Na Vasil'evskij ostrov ja pridu umirat').The Evening in the "Berlin Club of Leningrad" dedicated to the city of Haifa (October 2016). S. Huseynova, Field Notes. For more details, see also the poem "The Bronze Horseman": (Pushkin 1960: 285-287). This work of Pushkin is included in the program of secondary schools.

It is not surprising that Leningraders / Petersburgers in Berlin often addressed this symbol as familiar from an early age. The “visiting card” of the “Berlin Club of Leningraders” and the obligatory images to be included in all events were created by one of its members – artist Boris Novozhilov. In an expressive and vivid manner, the author included in his painting many recognizable symbols of Petersburg, well-known not only to every club member and, more broadly, the urban imaginary community, but also to the majority of the residents of post-Soviet space, and to numerous tourists visiting the northern capital. The Bronze Horseman – the central part of the composition – calls for appreciation of the beauty and efforts of “Peter’s great creation”. His eyes turn toward the "sovereign" Neva, one of the famous drawbridges, the Vasilyevsky Island and the Peter and Paul Fortress. In addition to the picture, all visitors who are interested in the activities of the community are met by a poster informing about the events taking place in the club, and describing its direct connection with the hometown. Decorated in the upper corners by the city emblems, the poster is filled with well-recognized symbols of the *Northern Palmyra*. The Bronze Horseman is represented twice here in different angles, accompanied by St Isaac's and Kazan's cathedrals, as well as the monument to Catherine the Great, which was inaugurated in 1873 (Alekseenko 1903: 261).

Favorite club practices of preserving the memory of Leningrad / Petersburg include a demonstration of visual narratives (films screening or presentations of rotative images of the city). Usually, such a demonstration is accompanied by Soviet songs familiar to all members of the club. The 10-year anniversary of the "Berlin Club of Leningraders" offers an idea of the most relevant and popular topics and images. The evening began with entering into the unique atmosphere of the old central part of the city. This was achieved through the screening of a video narrative composed of the most recognizable images in succession: the Palace Square and the Winter Palace, the Admiralty and the Peter and Paul Fortress, the Isaakievsky and Kazan Cathedrals, the Alexandrinsky Theater and the Russian Museum, the wide Neva with drawbridges, the Monument to Pushkin, the Church of the Savior on Blood, the Summer garden, a monument to Nicholas I, white nights, etc. The most recognizable images of pre-revolutionary Petersburg are perceived as unchanging in time, as is the love of Leningraders to their hometown. Of course, the most famous symbol of the city – “The Bronze Horseman" – appeared on the screen several times.

Nostalgic intonation is enhanced by the musical accompaniment of the visual narratives, reminiscent of those gathered about their youth. To create an appropriate atmosphere, the "Evening Song" was employed (“Vechernjaja pesnja”), written by V.

Soloviev-Sedoy and A. Churkin (1963) : “Listen, Leningrad, I'll sing to you / my sincere song. / Here was, friends, / My Komsomol youth. / [...] Since this time on fire, / Wherever you met with me, / Old friends, in you I recognize / My own uneasy youth.”[345] (“Slushaj, Leningrad, ja tebe spoju/ Zadushevnuju pesnju svoju./ Zdes' prohodila, druz'ja,/ Junost' komsomol'skaja moja./ [...] S jetoj pory ognevoj/ Gde by vy ne vstretilis' so mnoj,/ Starye druz'ja, v vas ja uznaju/ Bespokojnuju junost' svoju”).

The city images appear throughout the whole evening, only the subject of the visual narratives changes. A separate series is dedicated to the war and the blockade. From the ceremonial tourism of Leningrad / Petersburg, participants of the evening move to the city of their everyday lives, filled with different sites of memory: cafes, bakeries or theaters. The song “Leningraders”, which is becoming especially relevant, performed by one of the most famous Soviet singer, Edita Pyekha, convey the nostalgic sentiments of emigrants gathered in Berlin: “And far away from Leningrad / It will dream of Leningrad / Leningraders, Leningraders, / There are many beautiful rivers in the world, / But the beginning of the whole of Russia / Here, at the Neva shores.”[346] (“I vdali ot Leningrada/ Budet snit'sja Leningrad/ Leningradcy, leningradcy,/ Mnogo v mire rek krasivyh,/ No nachalo vsej Rossii/ Zdes', u Nevskih beregov”). But Leningrad is not only the coastal settlement along the symbolically significant Neva, as most Russian cities are located along the river. The main zest of the city on the Neva is its proximity to the Baltic Sea.

Therefore, the Baltic theme, in turn, is very popular, reminding the audience of St Petersburg as the birthplace in the Russian tradition of romantic sea voyages and heroic battles. In “The Bronze Horseman”, the Petrine idea of building a new capital based in the Baltic Sea (“To step with a strong foot by waters”, “Nogoju tverdoj stat' pri more”) allows for reference to a large set of symbols distinguishing Petersburg from other Russian cities, most of all, from its main competitor – Moscow. At the jubilee party, this specificity of the city was expressed by the steeple of the Admiralty, “which crowns – as the moderator of the event Elena Lurie expressed – a golden boat, a symbol of the Russian fleet.” The maritime theme was echoed by member of the club Alexander Galkin:

> “*I was always closely tied to the sea, as well as some members of our club. That's why specifically we have our own ‘section’* [in the club] - *the sailors of the Baltic Fleet. And our good tradition was to celebrate the Navy Day in the Leningraders club, on the last Sunday of July.* [...] *Among the officers and sailors, it was very rare to meet a person of Jewish nationality. But to be at the same time a sailor,*

[345] Translated by Dmitriy Hvorostovskiy at https://lyricstranslate.com
[346]Music and lyrics by Anatolij Savchenko (1986).

Jew and a diver is a unique case! Please welcome, Yakov Tkach! If you saw how he danced in his youth 'Yablochko'![347] *But alas, why don't we sing*!?" (man, 61 years old, Berlin, April 2015).

The 10th Anniversary evening of the Club of Leningraders.
Berlin, April 2015. Photo by S. Huseynova

And members of the club, "tied to the sea", continued their performance with the famous Soviet song "Evening on a Raid", created in Leningrad in August 1941. To participate in the evening, Galkin and Tkach were dressed in naval uniforms and brought with them a naval flag of the USSR. The performance of the Baltic sailors was accompanied by a separate visual narrative, re-creating pictures from life in the navy.[348] The internal heterogeneity of the community makes it possible to significantly diversify amateur performances. All assembling members of the club are united by a common love for Leningrad and a *life well-lived* in their city. But everyone had his or her own life and members of the club created their own "sections" of different interests. The club itself remains a common public space in which participants can share personal experiences and memories with other Leningraders.

[347]Folklore Russian dance song. "A lot of instrumental variations, fantasies, and dance pieces have been written about "'Yablochko'. The most famous is 'The Dance of Soviet Sailors' from the ballet 'Red Flower' by Gliere" (Shirokov 1988: 12).
[348] The jubilee evening dedicated to the 10th anniversary of the Club of Leningraders at the Jewish Community of Berlin (is this another club?). 14.04.2015, S.Huseynova, Field Notes.

Visual narratives (video and photos) are also in demand at the events of the Odessa club. In this club, artistic amateur performance plays an even more significant role than for the Leningraders. Members of the "Club of Odessites" are very enthusiastic in the preparation and presentation of various theatrical performances. As, for example, in the case of the event dedicated to the 220th anniversary of Odessa, which included a performance of four members of the club impersonating Catherine the Great, Joseph de Ribas, Benia Krik and Kostya the Fisherman. The chosen characters reflect the important role assigned to the founding fathers, to writer Isaac Babel, and also to the marine theme, deprived of any military component in the city discourse and myth. *The Pearl by the Sea* is a commercial port that has never played an important military role.[349] Therefore, a proximity to the sea conveys a symbolic image of Kostya the Fisherman - a character from the song "Shalandy polnye kefali". The uniqueness of Odessa is accentuated by Ekaterina the Great: "There will be a fairy-tale city here! There will be a port city here! / All in bright juicy colors! / And the beaches! And the resort!".[350] The warm Black Sea in the Odessa discourse has a very significant role. Participants of amateur performances constantly emphasize the proximity of the city to the sea, often wearing popular marine caps, a souvenir brought from Odessa.[351]

[349]Probably the situation will change after the annexation of the Crimea. It was in Odessa that the Ukrainian navy was redeployed.

[350] Poems of club member Semjen Aledort, "City fairy-tale", an imitation of Mayakovsky. Odessa's 220th anniversary, Berlin, September 19, 2012. S.Huseynova, Field Notes.

[351] For example, the 12-year anniversary celebration of the Odessa club was opened by seven members of the club, including its leaders. All of them wore such caps, pointing to the seaside status of Odessa. The 12-year anniversary celebration of the Odessa club. 07.04.2013, Berlin, S.Huseynova, Field Notes.

The evening dedicated to the 220th anniversary of Odessa. From left to right: Catherine the Great, Joseph de Ribas, Benia Krik and Kostya the Fisherman. Berlin, September 2014. Photo by S. Huseynova

The evening dedicated to the city's birthday[352] was decorated with two specially created booths designed to recall the 220-year history of *Southern Palmyra*. Symbolically significant for the Odessa community is a character that emphasizes the Europeanness of Odessa, Duke Richelieu, who "discovered – according to Oleg Gubar – the city for Europe and for the World" (2014: 23). Many portraits of this historical figure have survived to this day, but the Duke's image, beloved by Odessites, has long been associated with the first monument in the city. Its famous sculptor was Ivan Martos, and the monument decorated the Seaside Boulevard as early as 1828, becoming "for generations of Odessa residents a worthy token of gratitude and appreciation to this outstanding political figure and person."[353] The “visiting card” of the "Berlin Club of Odessites" is fashioned much more modestly compared to the picture of Leningraders. A club poster comprised of two images – the Brandenburg Gate and the same monument to Duke Richelieu – informs about the immigrant status of the community. The Monument to Richelieu is an obligatory image of all the club booths and stands, which are constantly renewed.

[352] The *City Day* of *Odessa* is celebrated on the 2 September.
[353] Tret'jak A. Gercog Rishel'e // Literaturnyj Al'manah "Deribasovskaja - Rishel'evskaja", # 12, 2003, s. 6-31.

The monument to Duke of Richelieu. Odessa, October 2016.
Photo by S. Huseynova

According to Ilya Ilf, by 1929 Odessa turned into one of the most "inhabited by monuments cities. Until the revolution there inhabited only four monuments: to Duke of Richelieu, Vorontsov, Pushkin and Catherine II. [...] But now there are at least three hundred sculptural decorations in Odessa".[354] Subsequently, their numbers constantly changed, but the number of significant images worthy of immortalization on the stands and posters of the club rarely exceeds four, represented in the form of city monuments. These are those artistic images of Richelieu or Catherine which belong only to Odessa. Immortalized through monuments, they secured their place in the history of the city and on the stands of the club. Of course, most of the images belong to the imperial "golden age" of Odessa. In addition to the Duke and the Empress, there is also a monument to de Wollant. And only a small sculptural monument, installed in the courtyard of the Literary Museum in Odessa, refers to the contemporary Mikhail Zhvanetskiy. Another symbolically significant sculptural composition decorating one of the Odessa houses and the emblem of *the Worldwide Club of Odessites* is the Atlanteans holding the globe.[355]

Two architectural structures are also of particular importance for Odessites who constantly reminisce about the uniqueness of their *Pearl by the Sea*. The first one is The

[354] Il'f I. Puteshestvie v Odessu. Pamjatniki, ljudi i dela sudebnye. Cited: (Kalmykova, Perel'muter 2014: 38-40).
[355]A well-known monument of architecture in Odessa – "House with Atlanteans" on Gogol Street, a palace belonged to the family von Falz-Fein.

Odessa National Academic Theatre of Opera and Ballet, which is a source of particular pride for their city, and is necessarily present at all club stands.

> "*I brought my friends to Odessa from Moscow. I took them to our Opera House. Vienna and our Odessa - two theaters-beauties! Real beauties! When I went to the Bolshoi Theater in Moscow, it just terribly killed me. Bolshoi! Bolshoi! And suddenly I came in and saw this kind of parquet* [pointing to the floor, meaning that it was the simplest]. *In Odessa, it is a beauty! As soon as you go in it smells like theater. So, you went into such an extraordinary beauty!"* (Jenya, woman, 77 years old, Berlin, June 2017).

The second construction is, perhaps, the only architectural monument known far beyond Odessa – the Potemkin Stairs. A grandiose engineering structure leads visitors from Primorsky Boulevard and the Richelieu Monument to the sea. World-wide fame came to the Potemkin Stairs after Sergei Eisenstein's film, *Battleship Potemkin*, and the famous scene of the brutal shooting of protesters and an abandoned baby in a carriage rolling down the steps (Ferro 1988: 68-70).

All listed images, included in the various visual narratives of the city, accompany almost all club events, constantly recalling the greatness and beauty of their hometown. These visual narratives are accompanied by diverse and often much more frivolous music, as compared to that of the Leningraders' clubs. The Odessites often create different poetic variations on the most famous Soviet melodies and songs, including those from popular cartoons. All visitors to the evenings sing with great enthusiasm upon hearing the familiar lyrics. Especially popular are the songs of Utyosov or modern chanson on the Odessa theme.

Through such practices, all club events turn into evenings of memory. And although the members of *The Baku Club* do not engage in amateur activities, as the Odessites and Leningraders do, music and visual narratives also serve as permanent reminders of their hometown, in addition to feasts. In this sense, festive or anniversary evenings in The Baku Club are often distinguished by special treats. The Azerbaijani cuisine defines and contrasts the boundaries with other communities more clearly. The Odessites, and their most "hospitable" club, in turn, always try to emphasize the uniqueness of the "Odessa cuisine", which begins and ends with forshmak and stuffed fish. Leningraders do not strive for originality in the culinary part of the evenings to the

same extent. The famous St Petersburg smelt (*korjushka*)[356] is not available in Berlin, and tables of Leningraders without superfluous dishes or culinary claims, as well as the contrasting feasts of Odessites or Bakuvians, are decorated by usual snacks from the Soviet era and often vodka.

[356] The name of a small "proletarian fish" (Lurie 2014: 36-42).

CHAPTER IV

CITY CLUB AS AN INSTITUTION OF THE URBAN COMMUNITY

> "The main objectives of the club are: to establish, develop and strengthen ties between the Odessites regardless of a country, a place where they actually live"

From the charter of the *Worldwide Club of Odessites*[357]

Year 1990: "Odessites of All Countries, Unite!"[358]

The year 1990 occupies a special place in history of the Soviet Union, as many developments that took place in that year occurred for the last time in history of the Soviet state. Therefore, it is not surprising that after almost two decades, the events of 1990 have attracted the attention of historians and social scientists. Several years ago, one of the most famous publishing houses in modern Russia, *Novoye Literaturnoye Obozreniye* (The New Literary Review), initiated an interesting project to study, describe and analyze the events of recent history. And it is no coincidence that the creators of the project chose the year 1990[359] – after all, it was the last year of the Soviet empire's existence.

Among the symbolic events that took place in 1990 one can remember the military parade in Moscow and demonstrations "dedicated to the anniversary of the Soviet Revolution. It was the last October demonstration in the Red Square to mark the

[357]See: First ("pilot") edition of the Worldwide Odessa News (a newspaper of the Worldwide Club of Odessites) November-December, 1990, p. 2.
[358]According to editor of the Worldwide Odessa News Yevgeniy Golubovsky, the author of this official slogan of the Worldwide Club of Odessites is a well-known writer and playwright Georgy Golubenko. In his speech in a gala concert dedicated to the opening of the club, Odessa Mayor Valentin Simonenko says this slogan was posted over the building of the City Council.
[359]The first results of this project were published in the Emergency Reserve newspaper in 2007 (№ 83/84).

anniversary of the 1917 revolution organized at the state level" (Dmitriyev, et. al., 2011: 396). The anniversary of the Revolution was traditionally celebrated on November 7 every year since 1918 (or, according to the old pre-revolutionary calendar, on October 25). "The Day of the Great October Socialist Revolution" was a major Soviet-wide holiday. In 1990, the history of this day as a state holiday ended. But the year 1990 was also marked by many other events that were inaugurated during the Soviet Union for the first time.

It also happened that on the night of November 7, 1990 the Mikhail Vodyanoy Musical Comedy Theatre in Odessa hosted the grand opening of the *Worldwide Club of Odessites*, which was later to be celebrated annually around that same date.

> "The presentation of the club and the first edition of a newspaper were held at night in November, 1990. This [...] was a funny challenge. Party organizations were collecting columns to celebrate the inaugural event, while we, sleepy, tired but happy with the birth of the club, were going home...". [360]

This date, symbolic for ex-Soviet citizens, may be considered as an *official* birth of the transnational and translocal Odessan community. In 1990, this November day (or rather night) became a kind of a revolutionary date when the institution aimed at constituting the community of Odessites in the new situation of its rapid global scattering was created. It is difficult to predict whether this city club will exist as long (or maybe even longer) as the October Revolution holiday did. But it is fair to say that the *Worldwide Club of Odessites* entered into the third decade of its existence as the core of a fast-growing global (transnational and translocal) network of city clubs.

Irina Prokhorova, speaking on her comparative analysis of different forms of event representation, notes that: "If we study only written sources dated back to 1990 (traditional print periodicals and personal diaries), the leitmotif will be a foreboding confusion and frustration. If we put an emphasis on new radio stations and especially on television, we see a completely different situation – positive and dynamic perception of reality. Due to the recently launched satellite TV channels 'Nostalgia', 'Retro TV', 'Vremya: dalekoye i blizkoye' ('Time: past and recent') and general 'retromania' on modern TV, people have a unique opportunity to watch a lot of TV programs broadcast in the second half of the 1980s" (Prokhorova 2011: 15). The "Nostalgia*"* TV channel

[360]Y. Goloubovsky. Editor's Notes. Times cannot be chosen. The newspaper "*The Worldwide Odessa News"* 1992, № 2 (5), p. 1.

once gave this unique opportunity to Director of the *Worldwide Club of Odessites*, Leonid Roukman:

> "*Ten years have passed [since November 1990], and it so happened that I watched a piece of our concert program on the Nostalgia Channel [...]. The next day I videotaped the program. And then our club members, along with the 'Kilometer Zero Computer Studio' that we cooperate with, made a video which we have put in our video library. Today, the full concert can be seen and heard on our website*" (man, 75 years old, Odessa, September 2012).

The concert, dedicated to the opening of the club, is suffused with positive perception of reality, as Prokhorova has pointed out. A speech given by Mikhail Zhvanetskiy, the first and only president of the club, in which he announced its opening, is a comic opus written in the dynamic style of texts by this ~~a~~ satirical writer widely known in the post-Soviet space. He begins: "*Now, we are open. We start keeping a half of the globe called Odessa in suspense*."[361] With this phrase, Zhvanetskiy points to a new transnational and translocal character of the Odessan community as far back as November 1990. By *new* character I mean that Odessans were unable, until recently, to discuss their community in public; there was no stage of a theatre on which an Odessan could address 'our' relatives, friends or former neighbours living abroad.

The Iron Curtain separated Odessites who left their hometown in the 1970-1980s from the absolute majority who remained there, though it was not completely impenetrable. Relatives and friends who left Soviet Odessa were remembered, as per Soviet tradition, only during *kitchen conversations*. By November 1990, it became possible to talk about them in public, even in front of hundreds of spectators.[362] Thus, the new transnational Odessan community is constructed in the context of the USSR's disintegration, mass immigration from the city, and a suddenly arisen opportunity to establish contacts and relations with many Odessites who left the city in the 1970-1980s. The work of imagination of many intellectuals from Odessa enabled quick transformation of the local urban community into the translocal and transnational one. By 1990, perceptions of the Odessan community as global were already widespread among intellectuals establishing the club. As a result, the club's name was intentionally formed

[361]See: The opening ceremony for the *World Club of Odessites* on the night of November 7, 1990, in the Mikhail Vodyanoy Musical Comedy Theatre: a concert film, "How it was done in Odessa or Odessites of all Countries, unite!" http://www.odessitclub.org/club/videoteka.php

[362]The hall of the Mikhail Vodyanoy Theater accommodates 1300 spectators. The record reveals that the opening concert was a sell-out.

in a spirit of irony, further emphasizing the discursive image of the Odessites' unique humor. This is the oxymoron of a community made up of residents from one city, which is at the same time, imaginatively perceived as a 'worldwide' community, and this *worldwideness* is discursively represented as the most important and distinctive feature of the Odessites:

> "And what is it about the idea of the Worldwide Club of Odessites: how do you think it could have been originated in other cities? [...] And if we could meet before on Deribasovskaya Street in the evenings, now, how do you like that, we can meet only at international conferences or during world tours!".[363]

> "The formation of the Worldwide Club of Odessites reminds again of the uniqueness of our city, because it is difficult to imagine the Worldwide Club of, for example, Barnaul, Syktyvkar, or Tula residents. Although it is not ruled out that it will be possible after adoption of the Law on the entry and exit. [...] Odessa belongs to the whole world while we belong to it! Long live Odessa, a city on the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea, Tasman Sea, the Pacific, Atlantic and other oceans!".[364]

> "*You see, there was a reason for the 'Worldwide' in its name [...] Well, the Odessites are great patriots of the city. When finding themselves outside it, a certain part of the Odessites, who are not 'Ivan not remembering who he was'*[365] *, have begun uniting by their interests.* [...] *They celebrate the Victory Day and the Liberation Day of Odessa. There are Odessan fellow hometown organizations in New York and Los Angeles.* [...] *But they were as separate groups. But there is*

[363]Y. Koltsov. *Vsem Mirom* (All Together), The Worldwide Odessa News, November-December, 1990, p. 5.

[364] *Davayte drujit klubami* (Let's our clubs have a friendship), Ibid, p. 3. This is an excerpt from a congratulation message sent by members of another Odessan Club well-known in the former Soviet space – the Club of Odessa Gentlemen. This is a satirical variety theater, created in 1987 on the basis of the team of the Ilya Mechnikov Odessa State University, which won the first season (1986-1987) of KVN humor TV contest (Klub Veselih i Nahodchivih, or Club of Funny and Inventive People). The history of the theater is an interesting example of transnationalization of the Odessan community. Six of its ten founders later emigrated from Odessa, and now live in the United States, Canada, Israel, France and Russia. KVN emerged during Khrushchev's Thaw and has evolved into a broad movement of student amateur performances, which were based on humorous speech and improvisation contests among teams from different universities and institutes. These contests were broadcast on television and the first program was shown in November, 1961. In 1972, it was closed and the last KVN champion was also a team from Odessa. KVN has since been revived, alongside the decline of the USSR in 1986. See: The official website of KVN International Union, KVN History, www.amik.ru

[365] An enduring expression in a modern context with a pejorative meaning that refers to people with no roots, who do not feel connected to any tradition (national, religious, cultural, etc.).

a reason why the club is called the 'Worldwide'. [...] *There is a newspaper called 'Worldwide Odessa News'. Its second column consists of letters from Odessites.* [...] *They often write: I would like to find so-and-so in Odessa. We print a letter in the newspaper. The man responds. People start contacting. That's all. So, that is why* […] *there is a slogan: 'Odessites of All Countries, Unite!'"* (Interview with local historian R. Aleksandrov, man, 73 years old, Odessa, September 2012).

Thus, the discourse of the *Odessan Diaspora* or *Odessan World*, as a global community, is widely spread among Odessa intellectuals in the last years of the USSR. This discourse of Odessa is aimed at destructing the image of locality of an urban community. Now Odessa is "the city inextricably bound to the world through the Odessites. The city destroying time and denying space".[366] Retrospective interpretation of the two-century history of the city and its inhabitants is carried out in the context of this discourse of "global Odessa" during the post-Soviet period. All previous migrations from the city (particularly in the beginning and the last third of the 20th century) are discursively perceived as more or less a single process of globalization of the urban community. Now, the history of the Odessan community is a story about scattering natives of one "unique city" throughout the world. It is no coincidence that in November, 1990, one of the most famous inhabitants of the city, the president of the newly created club, satirical writer Mikhail Zhvanetskiy, who had long been living mostly in Moscow by that time, publicly said about Odessa and the Odessites, as a transnational phenomenon:

"Let many people be proud of vast expanses and fields. Someone tenderly hugs a birch, thinking that it grows only here. Let the Conservatives and Liberals clash. We have the only homeland - Odessa, and the only party of the Odessites. Odessa stretched over half the world - from America to Australia. Odessa is a phenomenon. Odessa is a character. Children do not forget their mother! Of course, not this one we have now. But the other one with the mild climate, the bright sun, blue sea and delicious air."[367]

[366]From Odessa for Olga Ilnitskaya – in La Paz (Bolivia), Dr. Eduardo Delgado for Irina Kuskova, The Worldwide Odessa News, March 1991, #1, p. 2.
[367]The opening ceremony for the *Worldwide Club of Odessites*. Ibid.

"Other" Odessa is not only a city from the Soviet past. This is a city of the childhood and youth of the club founders. In November 1990, it ~~is~~ was almost impossible to catch any notes of nostalgia for the Soviet stability (or the "period of stagnation"). Public speeches and published texts were full of irony about everything Soviet and criticism of the deplorable modern forms of speaking and writing, as well as the general state of the city. The idea (goal) of the club is represented as a step toward "salvation" of the city: "*Odessa is in danger! If, God forbid, it will not be the same as we remember and know it, what will happen to us*?". [368] This danger exists not because of Odessites' mass emigration, or more precisely, not only because of the mass emigration. The threat of disappearance is also due to the deplorable financial and economic situation in the city. Nevertheless, Odessites can find a reason to smile, even in a sad situation: "*A stranger asks an Odessite: - Where can I see old Odessa? - At the cemetery! Odessa loses Odessites and its individuality*."[369]

In the 1990s, Odessa needs salvation from the economic desolation accompanied by environmental disasters and other challenges. According to Yevgeniy Goloubovsky, the first and only editor of *The Worldwide Odessa News*, "the city is in a disastrous state. As Atlantis sank into the ocean, so Odessa, alas, may go underground, to disappear from the face of the earth." But this miserable condition of the city is seen as a chance to form an Odessan community in its new transnational state. In a situation of financial and economic desolation, the diktat of power is decreasing, and in November, 1990, the state becomes the object of everybody's irony. Especially, in Odessa, where humor is required. And Zhvanetskiy does not miss an opportunity to kid the failure Soviet regime on the stage:

> "They are unlucky! Whatever they invent, everything fails. For example, they are completing a huge department store at Privoz[370], just when all goods have ended. And we thought that while the city is so desolate and disappointed, it is time to use this bedlam and to try to liberate the city from the state. To unite all Odessites, wherever they are. For the sake of this fun and hopeless business, the Worldwide Odessites Club has been planned."[371]

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[368]Y. Koltsov. *Vsem Mirom* (All Together), The Worldwide Odessa News, November-December, Ibid. p. 5.
[369]V. Karp You are an Odessite in Israel! A branch office of the club established in Tel-Aviv, The Worldwide Odessa News, 1991, #2, p. 4.
[370]The most popular bazaar in the city.
[371]The opening ceremony for the *Worldwide Club of Odessites.* Ibid.

In November, 1990, the founders of the club did not only demonstrate their open unwillingness to live in the former Soviet state, but also stressed that they only care about the fate of their native city. The Odessa discourse of late 1990 is a discourse on the unique island-Odessa, in which an image of the self-sufficient city that does not need the country is forming. Odessa has no need to become part of an independent nation-state. On the contrary, the lesser the influence of the state in the life of Odessites, and the more chances they have to liberate their city from the state, the easier they live. According to Yevgeniy Goloubovsky: "fortunately, even today Odessa is a kind of an island in the sea of international conflicts. Therefore, it is necessary to protect 'the Odessa character', the spirit of Odessa*."*[372] In another issue he writes:

> "We can and should try to understand how and why it happened that in the sea of passions – national and social – Odessa really remains an island, where people smile, talk to each other, listen to each other, and live after all." [373]

Thus, the city discursively finds itself outside political conflicts aggravated before the collapse of the USSR. Imaginary 'spirit' of the city and the 'character' of the Odessites are the metaphorical categories through which Goloubovsky de-ideologizes and depoliticizes both the community itself and the city club created by activists. The Soviet past, in which there was nothing creative for an intellectual native of Odessa in 1990 ('even 73 years of the post-revolutionary life could not destroy this community of people'), is simply rejected. Supporting such metaphors is Goloubovsky's primary aim for designing a new transnational discourse of a post-Soviet society. The metaphor of the island is, thus, very opportune for the newspaper editor, as Odessa becomes an island of refuge in the post-Soviet sea of political conflicts. And the creators of the club believe the only way to save the island is to build and strengthen relationships among all 'genuine' Odessites, whose number abroad is now greater than in Odessa. Therefore, according to Goloubovsky, the newspaper he heads *will become a post bridge across continents*, and will talk about the *Odessan Diaspora*.

Problems of the Soviet empire, in addition to Ukraine's independent or non-existent future, are not a source of anxiety for the club founders.[374] In fact, the discourse

[372]Y. Goloubovsky. Over The Barriers, The Worldwide Odessa News, November-December, 1990, p. 1.
[373]Y. Goloubovsky. Odessa Island, The Worldwide Odessa News, 1991, #2, p. 1.
[374]Irina Popova, Ph.D., argues this based on a visit to Odessa by a politician from Kiev ('one of the leaders of the democratic opposition in the Ukrainian parliament'), who remarked that while the Odessites

of Odessa natives in November 1990 is almost depoliticized. The club – or the idea of its creation – is not so much aligned with "anti" but "post"-Soviet discourse. If the prefix "anti" has political overtones, then "post" is a simple statement of the fact of the Soviet past. It is no coincidence that the club creators (including Zhvanetskiy) emphasize the non-political nature of their work: "we have the only party – the party of Odessites." Club members want to save their hometown by maintaining or re-establishing the relationships among all Odessites scattered around the world. They already live in the post-Soviet and post-socialist world, though their city *still* bears Soviet markers. In the state theater, Zhvanetskiy announces: "*The address for letters* [to the club] *is: Odessa, Engels street, sorry! Once we completely abandon socialism, it will be: Marazliyevskaya, 7*." In this *New World*, the borders do not hinder the work of imagination aimed at the construction of a transnational community. Only the Odessites can and should save Odessa. As Goloubovsky says:

> "Odessites always and everywhere were patriots of their city. They created the Odessa fellow hometown organizations in Moscow and Vladivostok, New York and Melbourne. [...] wherever they were, the Odessites were always interested in Odessa lives, what's new in Odessa."[375]

> "Only united, only all Odessites together under the flag of the Worldwide Club of Odessites! Let's put our hands on the sick body of the city, embrace it all together and protect [...] Odessa should not dissolve in other cities and countries! Every Odessite should stay in Odessa and with Odessa if not physically, then mentally."[376]

An institution intended to maintain or restore solidarity amid the rapid transnationalization of the urban community develops within the discourse on salvation of the city, the homeland of the unique Odessite community. The club establishes links

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overcome economic hardships through their great sense of humor, residents of Kiev are more actively involved in political processes. The politician complained of no "mass awakening in Odessa." Popova speaks ironically about this visit and the political activity of Kiev residents. In her view, 'unawakened' Odessites take a correct stand in distrusting authorities and prioritizing their own problems. Referring to a survey conducted in October, 1991, Popova emphasizes that only one in ten Odessites are more concerned about national political issues ('the construction of an independent state,' etc.) than the local economy. On the contrary, 85 per cent of Odessites think more about daily costs. Popova ironically says that the 'inactive' Odessites show an extremely low level of trust to the authorities and even lower to the local authorities (councils). The absolute majority of Odessites do not care about the issues of Ukraine's independence. I. Popova, Odessa is the most Odessan of all Odessas, The Worldwide Odessa News, 1992, # 2(5), p. 7.

[375] Y. Goloubovsky, Over The Barriers. Ibid.

[376] Y. Koltsov. *Vsem Mirom* (All Together), Ibid.

among *patriots of the city* who remain and all *genuine Odessites* living abroad. Because "*there are Odessites living in Odessa, and not only outside it, and we hope that the Worldwide Club of Odessites will be able to participate in the revival of our city*."[377] To create conditions for the revival of Odessa, the club is born simultaneously with its newspaper, which, as Zhvanetskiy promised, will contain everything, "including the remaining humor of remaining people." In November, 1990, it was the newspaper that became most important and is still the only tool of transnational communication due to a lack of widely available electronic media and communication facilities. The potential success or failure of the club was largely dependent on the intellectual activists who created and headed it.

The Worldwide Club of Odessites as a local elite institution

The Worldwide Club of Odessites was set up as an elite organization. "*We do not have many members. Around 50. A total of 55*".[378] In a way, this club is a voluntary commonwealth of well-known Oddesan intellectuals, as it consists primarily in culture figures: writers (especially satirists), poets, artists, painters, etc. The founders also strive to attract business people, because, like any other organization, the club needs constant funding. However, the promotion of the club to attract new people – those who would like to become full members – is not considered a key task in its activities. The history of this transnational institution, as its founders describe it, shows that:

> "the Worldwide Club of Odessites and its presidential board include people who are well-known in Odessa – industrialists, bankers, lawyers, actors, artists, doctors, writers, historians, scientists, and musicians. One can say confidently that this is the intellectual and spiritual elite of Odessa".[379]

> "This is, of course, the elite of Odessa: artists and writers, lawyers and doctors, factory directors and port authorities, scientists and actors, musicians and entrepreneurs, the director of the culture and that of the wedding palace, the bank manager and director of the rehabilitation center for disabled children ... It

[377] *Davayte drujit klubami* (Let's our clubs have a friendship), Ibid.
[378] Interview with L. M. Roukman, Odessa, 19 September 2012.
[379] History of the club, https://www.odessitclub.org/index.php/o-klube/iz-istorii-kluba

includes those who by the decision of the Presidential Council of the Worldwide Club of Odessites were awarded the title 'Honorary Odessite'".[380]

In order to become a full member of the club one needs reference letters from two such members and a positive decision by the presidential board. Correspondingly, each new member becomes another representative of the "elite". A full member of the club is normally an Odessite (i.e. someone who has the relevant urban habitus) but does not necessarily live on Odessa. The very nature of this institution implies the constant construction and reconstruction of *Odessiteness.* Therefore, a club member is not simply someone who speaks the language that Odessites speak; many share with other Odessites the memory of Odessa as the town of their childhood and youth.

A club member is also someone who has the necessary cultural capital. Many full members of the club are those who are capable of embodying Odessa and the imagined community of Odessites in a written (poetry, nonfiction, and bélles-léttres prose) or visual narrative (movie, painting, etc). Those are Odessites who have the power and cultural capital, as representatives of urban elite, necessary to construct an influential discourse about Odessa as a unique socio-cultural space and Odessites as an imagined transnational community. This power to construct a discourse is based not only on the strength of urban habitus and capital (social and cultural) in a particular Odessite, but also recognition from other members in the same imagined community. Membership in the club implies not only the readiness to pay fees[381] or one's engagement in the activities of the club, but also one's personal concern for problems facing the city and the community, and voluntary active involvement in the process of constructing an influential discourse about Odessa and Odessites.

According to the charter of the club, its highest body is the *Congress*. However, in reality, all main decisions over the years of the club's existence have been made by its presidential board, whereas daily problems and tasks are dealt with by the club's direction team. Having once joined this elite club, the club's president, as well as most members of the presidential board (a total of 16) stay in it on a permanent basis. Zhvanetskiy is the official face of the umbrella club, under which other city clubs, fellow townsmen

[380]The title was established for the 200th anniversary of Odessa (1994) and is awarded to Odessites "regardless of their current place of residence." See: Vladimirskaya G. *Worldwide Club of Odessites*: people, events, facts. Newspaper "Worldwide Odessa News" 2000, № 4(42), c. 3.

[381]The former club director, L. M. Roukman, says: "*Our fees are quite high. The entry fee was 100 dollars, and now is 300. Membership fees used to be a bit less than 10 dollars. Now it's 20, enough to keep almost half the office going*" (L.M Roukman, man, 75 years old, Odessa, September 2012).

associations and social groups also established by Odessites are connected. He is a well-known satirist and performer and has the honorary titles of a people's artist of Ukraine and an honorary arts figure of Russia. And, finally, for three decades now he has been the president of *the Worldwide Club of Odessites*. Most of other members of the board are also poets and writers. But it is Zhvanetskiy that is "All that we have!".[382]

One may argue that Zhvanetskiy is the most well-known Odessite outside Odessa. Philosopher Dmitriy Zanerv calls him the *Oddesa ice-breaker* and argues that Zhvanetskiy is the *last great Russian writer.*[383] The president of the club appeared from Odessa as the *great Odessite*, and it is thus unsurprising that Zhvanetskiy has a small sculpture devoted to him in the garden of sculptures of the Odessa literature museum. The recognition of his special status by other members of the elite club helps Zhvanetskiy concentrate power to produce an active discourse about the unique community of Odessites.

The urban habitus of this most famous and accomplished Odessite in the post-Soviet space[384] presumes that he was definitely born in that city. The satirist's personal website features general information about his life and also several interviews in which he talks about himself. Zhvanetskiy was born in Odessa in 1934, where he finished secondary school, trained to be a mechanical engineer and started his professional career. It was in Odessa that Zhvanetskiy met the USSR's most famous satirical actor Arkadiy Raykin who invited him to Moscow. He then moved to the capital of the Soviet Union in 1964 at age 30,[385] and has since tried to visit his hometown every year. In the past two decades, Zhvanetskiy has frequently spent all summer in the city, staying until the end of September. So, the president of the club lives a translocal life between Moscow and Odessa, not counting the other numerous towns that he visits each year on tours. In Odessa, he lives and has a rest, in Moscow he lives and works. In 1988, he established his own Moscow theatre of short performances, thus becoming its Arts Director, one more irreplaceable position. Very often in his performances and interviews Zhvanetskiy mentions that he is originally from Odessa:

[382]He appears under this title on the list of members of the presidential board of the club. https://www.odessitclub.org/index.php/o-klube/prezidentskij-sovet
[383] Zanerv D. Odessa ice-breaker, http://www.jvanetsky.ru/data/text/pf/odessky_ledokol/
[384] Like in transnational communities created by natives of Odessa.
[385] Official biography, http://www.jvanetsky.ru/data/text/po/oficial_biography/

> "One would be happy to live next to a person like the sea. And people pay huge money – just to be close [...] So, I cannot live without Odessa. This is why I built a house there"[386].

Zhvanetskiy's activities in Moscow – the centre of a huge Soviet empire – brought him wide popularity back in the years of the USSR, and, what is more important, provided him with a platform to promote, in the widest form possible, discourse about the uniqueness of Odessa and Odessites. His intensive activity and authority among his colleagues (some of whom, in turn, are also natives of Odessa) allows him to mobilize many known satirical writers and performers for the Odessite holiday called *Yumorina*. This annual festival/carnival preserves Odessa's stratus of "the capital of humour".

Furthermore, the significance of the positions occupied by writers and poets in the club as key producers of narratives and discourses about the uniqueness of Odessa and the community of Odessites is also reflected in the fact that both vice-presidents of the board are professional literary men. Yevgeniy Golubovskiy, a well-known journalist in Odessa, has been the editor-in-chief of the newspaper *Vsemirnyye Odesskiye Novosti* (WorldWide Odessa News) for 28 years now. The second vice-president – Valeriy Khait, is another well-known writer in Odessa and the editor-in-chief of humour magazine Fontan (Fountain).

The social capital that possessed by all members of the club (especially those on the presidential board) allows them to establish and maintain mutually beneficial relations with the city administration. At the inaugural concert in November 1990, Mikhail Zhvanetskiy referred to Odessite Valentin Simonenko, who headed the executive committee in 1990, not only as the mayor of the city but also his good acquaintance.

> "*Then* [in 1990] *there were no such organized fellow townsmen associations, because there was nobody to organize them from Odessa in any way. So, Zhvanetskiy arrived in Odessa. Valentin Simonenko was the city mayor then. He is a very well-known person, a very progressive one* [...] *and they* [Zhvanetskiy and Simonenko] *had good relations. Zhvanetskiy gathered his friends here in Odessa. The club did not exist yet. And he said that there was such an idea. And a friend of his suggested establishing the Worldwide Club of Odessites in Odessa* [...] *and there were five or six or seven of them there and they backed this idea.*

[386] All of Zhvanetskiy, http://www.jvanetsky.ru/data/text/pi/polnyi_jvanetskii/

Zhvanetskiy backed it, saying that come on, let's do it, this is very interesting. He passed this idea on to the city mayor. The city mayor also got enthusiastic about this idea because he was a patriot of the city. [...] *The mayor backed it and said they would make premises available and that the charter should be worked out. And it is the 21st year now, the premises are at 7 Marazliyevskaya.* [...] *That building used to belong to one of the city services, and the premises were made available* (Leonid Roukman, man, 75 years old, Odessa, September 2012).

So, it is with the support of the head of city administration that the club has been provided with permanent premises. The absence of such is typically the main problem for the activities of these kinds of organizations, especially those established in emigration. In Odessa itself, the club appears not only as a small project but that of an influential group of city intellectuals, actively supported by the city authorities. Almost thirty years after the establishment of the club, it has developed its own rules for holding different kinds of events, many of which are traditionally held each year. The social capital of the organizers has allowed them, through all these years, to maintain their personal contacts with the city authorities who often take part in the implementation of different projects the club has run.

"Remaining humor of remaining people"

The activity of *the Worldwide Club of Odessites* is eventful and diverse. It not only brings together the full members seeking constant communication with each other, but also open participation for guests. Many evenings, exhibitions, or presentations allow members to extend a special invitation to guests, who may also be representatives of Odessa's cultural elite, business sector, or high-ranking city officials. The problem is rarely a lack of visitors, but a lack of space in a club room, which accommodates no more than 60-70 people. For those who are engaged in solving everyday operations and organization of events (members of the management, etc.), the club is not work, but a way of life.

"*We have occupied ourselves with the city, the business we love. Because there are a lot of interesting things in Odessa. And not to mention the fact that we have*

a through-passage yard here [in the club][387]. *I have here the friends whom I would never meet in my life. They are great people.*" (Arkady Kremer, man, 64 years old, the former deputy director of the club, Odessa, September 2012)

All that the activists of the club propose or enact supposes and realizes the active work of its founders' imagination, and their belief in the existence of a global *Odessan world*, the center of which is an imaginary historical or real Odessa rather than the modern *real* city. When constructing the discourse on Odessa, i.e. producing and/or supporting the production of the Odessa narratives, the activists of the club represent their attempts as the desire to *preserve* the spirit of the *real* Odessa and Odessites. Which, by their own admission, is vanishing in Odessa.

"*Memory is a memory. But Odessa itself... Of course, Mikhail Zhvanetskiy rightly said that Odessa has departed, and today, as he once famously said, it is smeared in a thin layer on the globe.* [...] *But, of course, the holy place never stays empty. Those Odessites, who left the city and who supported this wonderful legend of Odessa, were replaced by people who came from the suburbs. From elsewhere. Therefore, Odessa is already, of course, not the same as it was. But it does not indicate that Odessa is perishing. Absolutely not. Because Odessa has always given a rise to a huge amount of talents. There was an article in the Odessa press, where it was said that I go into the Deribassovskaya and this is not the same Odessa. Not the same people, not the same talks. That Odessa does not exist anymore. It was written in 1901. He [the journalist] wrote at that time that this is not the same Odessa. Yes, Odessa is changing, but Odessa lives. No matter how it is being insulted*" (A. Gorbatyuk, man, about 70 years old, Odessa, September 2012).

But the club, as a kind of quintessence of Odessiteness, is not a museum where the remaining *real Odessites* remodel a familiar communication atmosphere. The club is not only a place where, according to Zhvanetskiy's figurative expression, "*remaining humor of the remaining people*" is still heard. It is also, by contrast, a modern institution created in response to the challenges of post-Soviet time. If Odessa today is not what it was before, there are many natives of the city who still remain "real Odessites", patriots

[387] "A through-passage yard" is an idiomatic expression implying a large number of visitors.

of the city despite being dispersed throughout the world. The club claims to be a kind of cultural and symbolic center of this *Odessan world*. Therefore, all the activities of the club are subject to an idea to preserve the "true spirit of Odessa," which its activists find, first of all, in the imperial past of the city.

That is, Odessa discursively remains an exclusively imperial city, and through this discourse Odessa's uniqueness is constructed not only (and not so much) through the story of its architectural beauty and other landmarks, but through thinking and talking about the biographies of certain 'great Odessites' among the administrative leaders of the Russian Empire (the royal governors, mayors, etc.). Such cultivated memories of an outstanding contribution of the Empire's 'great' city governors to Odessa has led to the post-Soviet tradition of holding evenings in their memory. Reiterating their biographies, producing many reports, speeches or lectures, and conducting traditional group talks and discussions, the activists of the club (members of the city's cultural elite) affirm, by their authority, the discourse on unique Odessa and Odessites.

In turn, the collective commemoration evenings, which the activists of the club routinely hold, transform into visual and textual narratives of the greatness of this city during the Empire: that is, the period of *real Odessa*. All these narratives are posted on the club's website, and widely available for any de-territorialized Odessite-user. Thus, although the club is elite, it is committed to the widest possible depiction and dissemination of its activity, and foremost, in the virtual (transnational and translocal) imagined post-Soviet community of the Odessites.

For example, in December, 2012, the activists of the club commemorated Flemish Franz de Volan, the first architect of Odessa and one of the key figures who laid the foundation of the city. Following traditions and rituals of the club, the ceremony included laying floral tributes at his monument and grave. Later, a textual and visual narrative was compiled (typically, a photo series or video material) and each native of Odessa who visited the club's website could experience the ceremony.[388] In the club, historians and local history specialists spoke about de Volan's outstanding contribution to the foundation and development of Odessa. Participants held discussions, during which each of them furthered the construction of Odessa's uniqueness discourse.[389] Many other well-known figures of the Russian Empire were commemorated in the club. Among them, of

[388]The grave is located in St Petersburg. But the story of the commemoration evening is accompanied by a photo featuring the activists of the club during their visit to St Petersburg and de Volan's grave.
[389] De Volan's commemoration evening, http://www.odessitclub.org/news_club/2012/22122012.php

course, was one of the founders of Odessa, Duke de Richelieu, to whom an evening in September 2006 was dedicated:

> "No calendar has a record that September 22 [...] 2006 marked the 240th anniversary of Duke de Richelieu's appointment as the first governor of Odessa. However, an honorary member of the club, known local historian Rostislav Aleksandrov, knew this fact and informed the club. After that, the Worldwide Club of Odessites spent the evening dedicated to Duke de Richelieu's birth on September 12, accepted Duke de Richelieu to the club, and laid a basket of flowers to Duke's monument on the Primorsky [Seaside] Boulevard on September 25".[390]

> "*Here we hold the events about which* [...] *some other organizations may not know. For example, we have marked Richelieu's anniversary a few years ago. We marched from the club to the monument and laid flowers. TV worked* [to document the procession]. *Then an event was held here* [at the club]"(R. Aleksandrov, man, 73 years old, Odessa, September 2012).

In 2007, the other two 'great Odessites' of the city's founding fathers were remembered at club events at the end of May. The first is Mikhail Semyonovich Vorontsov:

> "[The memorial evening] dedicated to the 225th anniversary of the Governor-General of New Russia, Grand Duke Mikhail Semyonovich Vorontsov, was held in a room full of people. For every Odessite, the figure of Vorontsov is symbolic, and the growing temporal distance only increases interest in him. [...] In Vorontsov's time, many architectural masterpieces were constructed in the city center, the plan of Moldavanka [a district of the city] was implemented, the procedure of breaking stones within the city was established, a duty-free port status was extended for 10 years, etc. Not every brilliant military leader, well-versed in military engineering and fortifications, could do as much good to the administrative service as Mikhail Semyonovich, the hero of Borodino, a friend of

[390] Duke de Richelieu's commemoration evening, http://www.odessitclub.org/news_club/2006/2209.htm

Lord Wellington and so on, did... [...] In short, Odessa is very much obliged to its Governor-General..."[391].

In the same month, the club remembered another "outstanding" city governor of the Russian Empire period:

"The Worldwide Club of Odessites hosted the memorial evening for Gregory Marazli, the legendary mayor of Odessa, a major public figure and philanthropist. [...] A street in the center of Odessa was named after Gregory Marazli. It was the street where the Worldwide Club of Odessites was opened in house #7. His monument is set up on the Greek Square. This autumn, there will be the second Marazli readings, which will bring together experts from Ukraine and Greece. Furthermore, it has become a tradition in Odessa to decorate its respectable citizens with the Order of Marazli. Two Chevaliers of the order participated in the memorial evening. They are a journalist and writer, club Vice-President, Yevgeniy Goloubovsky and Vice-President of the Bar Association, Joseph Bronz."[392]

In Odessa discourse, there is no place for any Soviet mayor. The socialist period in the history of the city and community of the Odessites is re-presented as a period of losses. But criticism of the Soviet elements in the life of the city does not perpetuate images of independent Ukraine. On the contrary, there is a discursive return to the *golden age* of Odessa, which is the period of empire, and in this sense, present Odessa is still an imperial city. The city's post-Soviet politics of commemoration is a reconstruction of memorial locations associated with the empire. The club celebrated poet Alexander Pushkin's 200th anniversary[393] but does not remember Ukrainian national poet Taras Shevchenko. In this context, the metaphor comparing Odessa to an island is once again apt. In the *sea* of Ukrainian independence, Odessites imagine themselves as a community-island that is proud of its imperial past.

[391]See: The memorial evening dedicated to the 225th anniversary of the Governor-General of New Russia, Grand Duke Mikhail Semyonovich Vorontsov. M. Gudima. This enigmatic Duke Vorontsov, http://www.odessitclub.org/news_club/2007/3105.htm
[392]See: The memorial evening for Gregory Marazli. N. Brjestovskaya. Serving through personal example, http://www.odessitclub.org/news_club/2007/0405.htm
[393]Vladimirskaya, Ibid.

At the same time, the personal biographies of Odessites who socialized in post-war Soviet Odessa allow for pride in both the imperial origin of the unique city and the urban community to which they attribute themselves, with its Soviet holidays and traditions. To a large extent, most of the Odessites still speak in 'a Bolshevik language.' Adopted in childhood, usual figures and turns of speech often make activists of the club speak the Soviet language about the great imperial past of the city. But the full extent of the Odessites' Soviet past is reflected when they hold holiday evenings. For example, the Odessa club always celebrates the so-called *Old New Year*, because:

> "The Worldwide Club of Odessites piously reveres traditions. Among them is the regular celebration of the old-style New Year on January 13. And even if the club members wander the streets of Vienna on the night of January 1 or dip into the warm waters along the coast of Egypt, they will certainly try to go back to Odessa before the Old New Year to visit a cozy cellar restaurant on the corner of Marazliyevskaya and Bazarnaya streets and to raise glasses to the hometown and its prosperity, to their club and its president, to wish each other health, luck and love in the new year."[394]

This tradition was established under Soviet power, when the Bolsheviks moved from the Julian calendar to the Gregorian one. Because the Old New Year was never a public holiday, it was not banned after the war. March 8th – International Women's Day – remains one of the few Soviet holidays that retained the status of a public holiday in almost all the CIS countries, and is naturally celebrated in the club. Another holiday, but with a political subtext – Victory Day (May 9), which is always marked in Odessa, also survived the collapse of the Soviet Union. Apparently, the fact that those commemorative holidays were directly related to the events of the 1917 October Revolution (anniversaries, birthdays of leaders, etc.) has been ignored in the new situation. But some other political holidays have preserved their symbolic significance. For example, on February 24, 2012, the club celebrated the Defender of the Fatherland Day[395], the former Soviet Army and Navy Day, which is unofficial in Ukraine now.[396]

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[394]Our favorite Old New Year, January 13, 2013, http://www.odessitclub.org/news_club/2013/23012013.php

[395]In the years of the Soviet Union, the holiday was celebrated on February 23. Due to organizational reasons, the evening in the club was put off till the next day.

[396]The Defender of the Fatherland Day was celebrated on February 24, 2012. "The Holiday that is Always with Us", http://www.odessitclub.org/news_club/2012/24022012.htm

And yet, while remaining largely socialized under Soviet power, the Odessites who created the club consider the *Day of the City* (the first weekend in September) as their major holiday. "*The already hospitable and crowded house on Marazliyevskaya 7, where the Worldwide Club of Odessites is located, barely accommodates all visitors on September 2. The fact is that the owners of the club announce the city's birthday as the Door Open Day".*[397] Another important holiday is the *Liberation Day of Odessa* (April 10). These holidays are not political but are directly related to the history of the local urban community in the Odessites' collective memory.

Thus, the preservation of many traditions established under socialism (as well as the habit of speaking in the *Soviet language*) does not contradict the fact that many of these holidays were not and are not political, but urban and local. Still, the most important events and holidays to represent the specificity of the Odessites' urban habitus are those which stress that Odessa is the capital of humor in the post-Soviet space. The club celebrates the May 1st Holiday with humor through the slogan "*everyone to the communist banquet.*" Similarly, the prankster's holiday is beloved:

> "*the most popular and wonderful events were and remain April Fools' Day gatherings involving numerous cheerful guests from Moscow and St Petersburg and club president Mikhail Zhvanetskiy's readings that he traditionally holds at the end of the summer-autumn season in Odessa before leaving for Moscow*."[398]

In the discourse on the Odessites' uniqueness, representation of Odessa as a city that gives rise to a large number of talents has a special importance. Even the *great figures* of the imperial period, the royal governors and mayors, cannot represent this quality of the city and the community. In the context of the Odessa discourse, their efforts enabled and created this *jewel by the sea.* But these founding fathers were not born in Odessa and, in most cases, did not die in Odessa. When it comes to the discursive representation of the Odessa talents, the city is understood as a socio-cultural space which generates them, and thus, the talented people must be natives of Odessa. At the same time, they must be widely recognized outside Odessa, which further stabilizes the Odessite community's transnational features. As these Odessa talents disperse in search of recognition, their physical absence in the city becomes important at the same time their discursive presence

[397]September 2, 2010, http://www.odessitclub.org/news_club/2010/020920101.htm
[398]Vladimirskaya, Ibid.

becomes permanent in it. Though they have left, they are still Odessites, who now bring wider glory to their native city.

In the context of this discourse, a talented and famous Odessite remains forever the same, even after living most of his life outside of Odessa. As, for example, Mikhail Zhvanetskiy, or most of the writers and poets who glorified Odessa in the first half of the 20th century and moved to Moscow in the 1920s. Evenings in their honor are included in the obligatory list. For example, in January 2007, the activists of the club visited the grave of famous Soviet writer Valentin Katayev, and laid flowers at the memorial plaque erected in his honor, before an obligatory party was held in the club,[399] In July of the same year, the club celebrated the birthday of writer Isaac Babel, who most contributed to the myth of the Odessan special language.[400] The year 2007, in particular, was abundant in evenings to honor the Odessa talents:

> "Three dates which a genuine Odessite needs to know have coincided this year. It was the 110th anniversary of outstanding Odessa writer Ilya Ilf. His earthly life ended 70 years ago. And 80 years have passed since an imperishable novel "The Golden Calf", a brainchild of Ilya Ilf and Yevgeniy Petrov, was published."[401]

The names of these two writers have a special place in the representation of Odessa as the capital of humor. In February 2009, the club dedicated an evening to poet and playwright Eduard Bagritsky on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of his death,[402] and the list goes on. But it is more important to understand that the discourse on Odessa as a city producing talents is supported in daily meetings and talks of the Odessites. At almost every event, members of the club find a reason to remember some of the talented native artists of the city.

> "*Odessa has always given talents. If you look at the Moscow elite, you see that 40 percent of it is Odessites. Nine art directors of Moscow theaters are Odessites. That is not known* [to everyone]*, but they are. It cannot be explained. Only the mentality of the city* "(A. Kremer, man, 73 years old, Odessa, September 2012).

[399]T.Orbatova. Valentin Katayev commemoration evening, http://www.odessitclub.org/news_club/2007/2201.htm
[400] R. Kreymerman. Babel's birthday, http://www.odessitclub.org/news_club/2007/1307.htm
[401] The Year of Ilf, http://www.odessitclub.org/news_club/2007/1510.htm
[402]The *Worldwide Club of Odessites* remembered Bagritsky, http://www.odessitclub.org/news_club/2009/26022009.htm

Memorial evenings in the club are just key moments of the commemoration *of talented Odessites*, which contribute to the production of a new visual and textual narrative. The influence of this discourse of Odessa, as a special socio-cultural urban space, and the Odessites, as a unique urban community, becomes apparent in its typical daily utterances. Therefore, this discourse is created by generations of ordinary Odessites through their everyday conversations. Additionally, members of the elite who gather in the club give this language more weight and importance, especially through production of printed texts that record and develop this discourse.

The publishing activity of the club is also connected to the process of its rapid commercialization. To survive and to save the club, its creators surely require funding. As members of the cultural elite, they look for resources not only among potential sponsors, but are also actively engaged in publishing activities. In recent years, various electronic products have also become increasingly popular. For example, according to Arkadii Kremer, an electronic "Guide to Odessa not only for onlookers" has appeared because he came across a similar publication on Paris through his Odessite friend who emigrated there. The guide comprised:

> "*Three-dimensional images made with compasses. It includes houses, courtyards; this is also a historical reference to persons, who lived in these houses, organizations, etc. This is a melancholy attraction because a person, who has not lived in Odessa for more than 20 years, opens and sees his courtyard, his broken window, his mailbox. I know how it affects people*." (A. Kremer, man, 73 years old, Odessa, September 2012).

Thus, the printed and electronic products issued by the club are designed both for visiting tourists visiting, for the Odessites who left the city, and also for those who still live and work in their hometown. The club declared itself to be a publishing center as far back as the time of its formation, as the release of the inaugural edition of *the Worldwide Odessa News* coincided with the opening of the club. Back when there was a lack of electronic communications, the newspaper was used to establish transnational contacts and to inform the Odessites, scattered in dozens of cities around the world, about the club created to connect them. Later, it was supplemented with the literary almanac "*Deribasovskaya-Rishelyevskaya*."

> “It is read in New York and Jerusalem, Berlin and Moscow, Kiev and Los Angeles. Odessites read it to tatters and smudges, and they are proud that in our

> difficult times, when magazines and newspapers are closed and published irregularly even in the capital, it [the almanac] is still released, maintaining a high standard and not changing its concept. Moreover, it shows enviable longevity compared with other such publications and celebrates its anniversary."[403]

Unlike the newspaper, which predated the website and only became widely circulated when it was archived online, the almanac appeared almost simultaneously with the website of *the Worldwide Club of Odessites* and was always available digitally. Therefore, all of its 52 editions are now available to every native of Odessa who is interested in its content. But this virtual activity of the club is not limited to the dissemination of different narratives and the consolidation of the Odessa discourse. The emergence of the website for *the Worldwide Club of Odessites* has created new conditions for the rapid development of this transnational community and network of institutions (city clubs), within which it is constituted.

[403] Al'manahu "Deribasovskaja-Rishel'evskaja" – desjat' let, https://www.odessitclub.org/index.php/novosti-i-publikatsii/1411-almanakhu-deribasovskaya-rishelevskaya-desyat-let

Berlin City Club:

the community of "scattered" Odessites

Map of the transnational network of the Club's branches decorates an interior of the Worldwide Club of Odessites. Odessa, October 2016. Photo by S. Huseynova

The poster decorating the wall of *the Worldwide Club* with one of the catchphrases of its president, Mikhail Zhvanetskiy, addresses the club's visitors. Built on wordplay, the message says that "*Odessites are scattered and concentrated: scattered ones – they are scattered all over the world, and concentrated ones – concentrated only in Odessa*".[404] By 2018, a mission to "*unite the Odessites living today all over the world*", is proclaimed by the *Worldwide Club*, contributing to the emergence of its 14 branches[405] scattered in

[404]At the beginning of the phrase the following meanings are used: "scattered", that is, inattentive and "concentrated", on the contrary, focusing on some matter. The second part of the phrase, built in Russian with the same words, refers to the theme of emigration and life in the native city.

[405]There are many more communities of Odessites. In Germany alone, there are such communities in several cities (Hamburg, Dusseldorf, Cologne, Bremen, Dresden etc.). Most of them do not organize any regular, formalized and public activities (regular evenings, collective trips, publication of newspapers, do not have charters, certificates for members, etc.), and most do not have permanent premises. Their collective events are much more informal and casual. Some of the hometown associations of Odessites are *incorporated into* non-profit organizations with the broader format, aimed at involving Russian-speaking migrants. As, for example, with the club "*Novye Vremena*" ("Neue Zeiten", http://verbund-ndmo.de/club-neue-zeiten/), established in Dusseldorf by migrants from Odessa. Or the society of literature and art "Lira" in Hamburg, which housed Odessites club – "*Vdali ot Djuka* " (Far from the Duke).

Affiliates – collective members – become those communities whose members emphasize their Odessa (local) patriotism and in emigration, share ideas and values promoted by the *World Club of Odessites*

different cities in the US, Canada, Israel, Germany, the Czech Republic, Russia and Australia. In the 1990's, the project *to unite Odessites* was implemented through the club newspaper *Worldwide Odessa News*. Contacts were also established via e-mail and telephone. "*There was information about the club in the newspaper,*" says former director Leonid Roukman, "*and when someone got into the club, they came from fellow townsmen associations, we made this announcement in the newspaper. And there was information about how to contact the club. But this was not enough*".[406]

In 2001, with the creation of the Internet site of *the Worldwide Club*, the process of constructing the transnational network of clubs came visibly alive. Most of the affiliates were established in the 2000s, in the period of increasingly widespread electronic media. In addition, by that time, strong informal relations had been established among many émigrés who left their hometown in the 1990s. Everyday life of the immigrant to such a large city as Berlin constantly confronted the Odessites with each other on different occasions, and *in a great variety of places.*

> "*We got acquainted somewhere accidentally. For example, in the same [Jewish] community. We visited some events there. Either there [in the community] got acquainted, or in a doctor's office. Well, we learned [from each other about migrants from Odessa]. Firstly, there were several well-known Odessites in Berlin. Well, for example, a very famous in Odessa TV moderator and announcer, Nelly Kharchenko, she is still here*" (Vladislav, man, 73 years old, Berlin, October 2012)

> "*Mostly, they got in touch with him* [Yuri Kurilsky – the first president of the Berlin club]. *After all, he was known from Odessa. They messaged each other or met at concerts, or at matches. That's how we met Arkasha* [one of the main activists of the club]. *And he* [Yuri Kurilsky] *decided that we need to establish our own club in Berlin since so many people were brought together.*" (Evgenija Kurilsky, woman, 65 years old, Berlin, March 2013)

(popularization of its history, myths, local culture, etc.), strive to build with this organization permanent and strong ties, and act on a regular basis. One such association is the Berlin club of Odessites based.

[406](Leonid Roukman, man, aged 75, September 2012, Odessa)

"*When we got together in Berlin, we started looking for each other. I met Yura Kurilsky by chance at the concert. Well, we tried to search through the community. But, unfortunately, Gemeinde* [the Jewish community] *did not provide any information on where their members came from. We have repeatedly appealed. They did not provide. I was lucky to meet Yura* [Kurilsky] *and Arkady* [one of the main activists of the club] *at* [Roman] *Kartsev's concert. I knew them from Odessa.*" (Mikhail Misozhnik, man, 67 years old, Berlin, May 2011)

Initially, contacts were made between relatives and close friends. During the first years of their stay in Germany, émigrés were scattered across different federal lands and cities. Using family and friendly relations, many sought to move to Berlin. In addition to being close to relatives and friends, they were also attracted by the dynamic life of the big city. Coming from a big urban center, they sought the most familiar atmosphere in the host country. In such a big city, Odessites quickly created a web of relationships, allowing them to exchange useful information and contacts, for instance: how to find Russian-speaking doctors. Most older natives of Odessa find the German language difficult.

The migrant communities have their own communication systems. Embassies, cultural centers and diaspora organizations (the "Russian House of Science and Culture" and the Jewish community) played a key role in the early years. Places for networking and exchanging information were kindergartens and schools teaching Russian language, as well as restaurants oriented to migrants from the post-Soviet space. Various public events help to establish networks, such as concerts designed for a Russian-speaking audience. Roman Kartsev, a famous comedian from Odessa, attracted many natives of his city. Then, making contact with other prominent Odessites enabled one to be included in, to varying degrees, a wide range of relations created by fellow townsmen. At some point, the most active participants of the informal networks changed the format of casual collective meetings to more regular ones. The model for the organization was the World Club of Odessites, while the network is mobilized by several activists, and headed by a person with the required social and symbolic capital. In the case of the Berlin club, it was Yuri Kurilsky, the well-known and successful coach of the women's volleyball team of the USSR and Ukraine. In club members' memories, Kurilsky, who died *unexpectedly* in 2005, was and remains a perfect example of Odessite:

"Yura – the rooted Odessite, with inherent characteristic of this 'nationality': easiness, a sense of humor, and the skill of a good joke. *Of course, it'll* be him –

witty, creative. Living in Berlin, out of nowhere he could create a beautiful Club of Odessites! [...] Yuri Kurilsky is *still to this day continuing* his work as a patriot and citizen of Odessa. He was part of Odessa, greeted by his beloved city, a thread that connects us with the Motherland. He was and remains the delegate of Odessa in Berlin. And that's why now our club is called 'Berlin Club of Odessites named after Yuri Kurilsky'."[407]

In the image of the first president of the club[408], the necessary social capital (including urban habitus as one of its forms) is concentrated, giving Kurilsky authority to construct a community of Odessites in Berlin and Germany. The accumulated social capital is reflected even in the interior of his Berlin apartment. As in other Odessites' apartments, one can find in Kurilsky's a lot of things brought from Odessa. For the most part, these are souvenirs, expensive china, and gifts given to him in different countries. But what contrasted the interior of the apartment are the numerous sports awards decorating the walls of the hall. One of them – a kind of *wall of fame*, is completely covered with certificates of merit. Cups and photos with celebrities remind each guest of the high sports achievements of Kurilsky.

"*Well, many knew him, in general. One handed over to another. The Odessites, they are even somehow connected here. Well, they are familiar anyway.* [...] *in general, the Odessites, somehow find each other (smiling). Well, they made phone calls. Someone told someone that Kurilsky came here. So the club was established in chain order. In general, there are few Odessites here, mostly people from Dnepropetrovsk and Kiev.* [...] *Our daughter lived in Berlin before us. She said there was a Russian-speaking shoemaker. We went there and met him. And he, of course, heard about Kurilsky. A lot of Russian-speaking people are his clients. And it went on. He* [the shoemaker] *turned out to be Odessite* [...]. *He had an older brother, whom Yura knew from Odessa.* [...] *And so the chain turned out"* (Evgenija Kurilsky, woman, 65 years old, Berlin, March 2013)

Although the natives of Odessa are inferior in number to émigrés from Dnepropetrovsk or Kiev, it was Odessites who created the first city club in Berlin. In

[407]A letter to the presidential council of the *Worldwide Club of Odessites* from the Council of the "Berlin Club of Odessites". Newspaper "Worldwide Odessa News", № 3 (74), 2009, p. 2.
[408]Analogous to the president of the *Worldwide Club of Odessites*

addition to the social capital necessary for the mobilization of the network, which Kurilsky possessed, the "urban patriotism" of the Odessites also played a role. Mostly, retired people in the older age group were mobilized, as they had plenty of time to participate in the creation of the club. They also experienced a lack of communication in emigration. These people, who went to Germany in middle age and older, share so much with their hometown, where they spent not only their youth but most of their lives.

> "*It was the year 2000. I was sitting at home, near the phone. The phone rang. I pick up the phone. 'Semyon? I am Yura'* [I heard]. *I said, 'nice to meet you. Are you Odessite?' I asked. 'Yes I'm Odessite.' 'And so I am.' 'My name is Grigoryev,' he said. 'We are going to organize a club of Odessites. You want us to have a club of Odessites, don't you?' he asked. I said, 'Why not.' And before that, there was an attempt to organize a club like this. By visiting the restaurant 'Odessa', they issued such a certificate.*[409] *But it was all not so much ... We were in the restaurant and had a meal, we remembered Odessa and that's all. And now they wanted to organize a club. 'Come tomorrow, if you can. We will meet at this address.' And this was the address of the newspaper 'Europe Express'. Well, I went there. And I was standing, it was cold, it was drizzling. And I looked and Mishka came at me* [Mikhail Misojnik, future leader of the club]. *He said: 'Have you come to the club?' 'Yes.' 'I'm glad to meet you.' Then we were gathered and went upstairs. This was organized by two people. Yuriy Kurilsky. A wonderful person.* [...] *And the second one was Grigoryev. He was a Russian man. He used to be the captain of the research ship Yuri Gagarin. They sailed everywhere with this equipment. He knew all the cosmonauts, and his wife was Jew. And so, they organized. First, the initiative group gathered. We were 10 or 11, and we raised money. We arranged* [our first meeting] *to coincide with April 10, 2001. April 10 is the Day of Liberation of Odessa.*[410] *And here in the 'Russian House',*[...] *the evening brought together more than 250 people. We were helped financially by the newspaper "Europe Express". The editor was Zarubin, a Russian man, his wife was Jew. We all put in together, each 50 euros. And they made cakes; there was tea and coffee there. And this was our first evening, to establish a club for Odessites. This initiative group became the council of the club. Since then, our club [*exists*], but in the beginning, we did not have a place to meet. We have been*

[409] One of the versions of certificates which were given to club's members.
[410] „from the Nazi occupation in 1944.

meeting in some cafes. It is possible! In short, from Gemeinde, [I was in] *a group that went to Israel, and the leader of the group was Vardi* [Joseph - director of the ZWST[411] (Berlin) until 2012]*, we all liked him so much. We had a good time. So, I asked Kurilsky one day, let's go* to the Gemeinde[412], to *Vardi, I assured you, he would help us with the hall. And we went. Yura Kurilsky, Yura Grigoriev and me. He accepted us very well and promised to help us. There was no financial support at that time. Now is* [a different time] *... as far as possible. When we came there, we took our own food with us. Well, when the club was organized, Yura* [Kurilsky] *did everything himself. He became a president. What tours has he organized! We had such wonderful evenings*!" (Semjen Aledort, man, 74 years old, Berlin, May 2011).

Kurilsky was not the only candidate for president of the club. Among the members of the community, there were other natives of Odessa who had the necessary social capital. As, for example, Yuri Grigoriev or Alexander Maniovich. On the one hand, this situation led to conflicts over the position, as a result of which the unsuccessful candidates often refused to participate in the club's life. On the other hand, the possibility of choice gave a certain stability and, in particular, at the initial stage, expanded the mobilization potential.

"*One day, we talked to Yura* [Kurilsky]. *He said, it would be advisable to unite us somehow. But we still did not know how. And one day* [...] *decided that we need to create a club of Odessa. We already knew that there was such a club. Only not a club, but a fellow townsmen association. It was in New York, Vancouver. Then, there was one in Los Angeles. And the 'Worldwide Club of Odessites' in Odessa.* [...] *And we decided to create* [our club], *to hold a meeting of all Odessites in Berlin. And the question was who would be the president of the club. There were two candidates, the first candidate was Yuri Kurilsky. And the second was the sea captain of 'Yuri Gagarin'. There was such a research institute, such a ship.* [...] *Yuri Grigoryev. But we are all former sportsmen, Yuri* [Kurilsky] *was closer to us. And by a majority of votes we elected him president.* [...] *About 200 men attended our first meeting at the 'Russian House'. On the 10th of April, the day of*

[411]ZWST- The *Central* Welfare Board of Jews in Germany operated in Berlin from 1989.
[412]At that time, the ZWST and the Jewish Community (Jüdische Gemeinde zu Berlin) shared the premises at one address – Oranienburgerstr.31. Many informants made no distinctions between these two organizations.

liberation of Odessa. [...] *But we did not know where to gather, where to hold events, no one knew anything. The first thing we did was the members of the club's council collected 50 marks each. The first membership fee. Because we did not have any money* (laughing). [...] *It was 2001. Well, we raised 500 marks. But, where to meet? The first event we organized in 'Astoria'* [Russian restaurant]. *It was a holiday, I do not remember, maybe on 8 March.* [...] *We celebrated long enough, congratulated each other and went home. And where to meet next? In cafes. We ordered a cup of coffee and discussed our issues. What's next?* [...] *Again in the 'Astoria'? In general, we were struggling with it for a year. We appealed to the Ukrainian Embassy, informed them that there was such a club. They offered us one room. But it was necessary to pay rent. We did not go".* (Mikhail Misojnik, man, 67 years old, Berlin, May 2011).

The attempts to find a permanent room for regular meetings emphasize the non-ethnic nature of the club. Of course, most activists, club members and regular visitors to the events are either Jews or Odessites from mixed (Russian-Jewish or Ukrainian-Jewish) families, but not exclusively. Russian language, in a certain sense, connected them with Russia (at least until the conflict in 2014). And so, the first meeting was held in the "Russian House". The geographical location of Odessa connected them with Ukraine. But not having received constant support neither in the "Russian House" nor from the Ukrainian embassy, they turned to the Jewish community, where they found a place. The community of Odessites living in Berlin is much wider than the number of regular visitors and activists of the club. The leaders and activists of the club are not able to keep everyone in the sphere of their influence, as much of their activities are determined by personal likes and dislikes. The club will soon turn 20 years old, and many people are old enough to have participated actively in the entire life of the club. During this time, the membership of the council and ordinary visitors of events have changed more than once. But the very fact of the long existence of the club, which never had any serious funding, and functioned for the most part on volunteer bases, speaks of the stable "urban patriotism" of the Odessites. Combined with, of course, desire for a comfortable atmosphere of communication with "the same Odessites", within Berlin.

The Odessites in Berlin:
Club Life in Translocal Space[413]

The Berlin Club of Odessites's many years of existence have helped leaders and activists gain experience in conducting evenings, and organizing collective trips and holidays. Of course, many members of the club often spend time together in a more informal atmosphere, celebrating various events (birthdays, holidays etc.). The activity of clubs differs from such informal meetings with its regularity and pretension to create an intellectual atmosphere. One can meet not only Odessites among visitors of events. And not all of them are necessarily permanent members of the club. The composition of visitors is determined by the theme of the evenings. The anniversaries of various native cities and the founding of the club attract the most interest.

For example, on 12 April 2011, the 10th anniversary of the Club of Odessites was celebrated. On this occasion, the event was hosted in the great hall of the Jewish Community with a capacity of up to 300 guests. As a rule, a lot of guests are invited to this type of event, and are seated at different tables. Separate tables are set for the representatives of the Jewish community, the members of the other city clubs (Leningrad, Baku, Moscow, Kiev) and other guests. Public demonstrations of mutual respect are expressed in solemn congratulations addressed to the Odessa club, which Odessites accept warmly and emphatically. In the words of Bourdieu, *reciprocal curtsies* give clubs a greater legitimacy. Furthermore, these exchanges serve to recognize the leadership of the Jewish community, which is often viewed as skeptical about of urban local patriotism.

Great jubilee evenings in the club of Odessites are improvised concerts. The main performers are active members of the club or invited singers and actors of various genres. For community members, such activities become a kind of collective hobby. Amateur performances, attractive for many Odessites, also demonstrate a high level of competence (knowledge of the history of the city, the cultural heritage of Odessa, etc.) and provide an occasion to compete with other clubs. The obligatory public expression of love for the "beautiful Odessa" is in the repertoire of such performances, in addition to commemorative evenings, where one can recall the years of life in the past in the hometown. The reason for such emphasis is to remind the guests of the club and

[413]This section will be built mainly on the observations I have collected. In order to avoid unnecessary references, I will not always refer to the field notes. Additional references will only refer to materials not reflected in the field notes.

themselves of the existence of a unique urban community. The metaphors about the "*nation of Odessites*" sound like a refrain at such events.

Intellectual evenings often begin with lectures or reports. At the meetings of Odessites in Berlin, such events are experienced as a forced attempt to maintain the club's formality and not to reduce the meeting only to conversations, feasts, and dances.[414] In addition, leaders and activists who take over the preparation and reading of reports are forced to fill free gaps between the main events of the year (all sorts including local, Jewish, and holidays inherited from the Soviet Union). The topics of lectures and reports can be divided into two groups: either a story of the "Jewish people", Israel, Jewish tradition, etc. or, what is told more often, is a narrative related to Odessa. Among members of the Berlin club, as among its leaders, it is difficult to meet intellectuals or artists, and the official presentations on such days are not very popular.

I will give an example of a typical event of this kind. On June 14, 2011, the club held an event dedicated to the memory of the opera singer, artist, and director of the Odessa Theater of Musical Comedy, Mikhail Vodianoi.[415] Being an ethnic Jew, he only moved to Odessa to live and work at the age of about 30 years. But in the postwar years, it was Vodianoi who created a number of very popular scenic and cinematic images of the *typical Odessite*. In many ways, it was thanks to him that Odessan speech was ever uttered in Soviet cinema. His success as a comedy actor was also very important for the Odessan myth, turning him into a *native* representative of the community. Thus, the choice of theme for the evening was not accidental, but the head of the club considered it uninteresting, preferring lectures connected with food and festivities rather than historical figures. For example, *May 9* celebrated on a boat with songs and snacks, or *the birthday of gefilte fish*.

The speaker was the club's poet Semyon Aledort. His version of the biography of Vodianoi was designed to touch upon the motives close to everyone. Although Vodianoi was not born in Odessa, Aledort informed the audience, "all his life he has worked and lived in it". The career of the artist could not develop successfully, given that he was an ethnic Jew. The greatest interest in his report was caused by the names of streets, theaters and other sites of memory of the city mentioned by Aledort, which were familiar and directly tied to the personal biographies and memories of all gathered. The report preceded the collective film screening (musical) – *The White Acacia* (1957), with

[414]Unlike the *Worldwide Club of Odessites*, in which the creation of an intellectual atmosphere for the Odessan myth and discourse to be reproduced is the main goal of its activity.
[415] See: (Tanny 2011: 140-141).

Vodianoi playing a key role. It was just one of those moments that often happen not only to Odessites but to all members of city clubs, when, according to Appadurai, "*moving images meet deterritorialized viewers*" (2005: 3-4). The film is familiar to older émigrés. Arkady, an active member of the club, who was around the table, did not fail to note that: "*We still remember the songs from this film. For that time, it was simply an amazingly beautiful film! With beautiful costumes and dresses for girls and sailors. And it was shot in the cleanest courtyard of Odessa. There were simply no such clean courtyards in Odessa!*".

However, the two-part and two-hour film, well-known to the audience, which many members of the club keep in the home film collections, did not arouse much interest. The president of the club, who did not want to lose the audience, made every effort to finish the show as soon as possible and invited the audience to "put on some music and have fun". It is the informal part of the meetings that attracts many visitors to these evenings. Regular collective trips to restaurants are difficult and expensive to organize. But for club events, participants (mostly women) bring with them usual meals and snacks, to be shared with one another, and get an opportunity to talk and have fun without wasting money on a restaurant. Once again, they remind themselves and those gathered that "*there are many beautiful cities in the world, but still Odessa, it is special*!" (D., man, aged about 65). They need only in some cases to get a little bored in the necessary formal part of the club format. Meanwhile, the choice of music and informal conversation can tell a lot about the preferences of Odessites and their attitude to Jewish traditions. The most popular music is a dance chanson, and the repertoire consists of songs dedicated to Odessa.[416] Turning to snacks, guests of the evening immediately recall the kosher wine, placed on the tables and provided by the Jewish community. The snacks provided by the Odessites do not correspond much to the Jewish tradition. On this occasion, popular jokes often sound in this spirit: "*Would you like to try kosher pork*?" (M., woman, aged about 70).

To a large extent, the forced appeal to the history of Israel and the Jewish tradition most often make the audience yawn. One of the typical practices of organizing evenings is the combination of several events. This approach allows paying tribute to the interests declared by the Jewish community[417], while celebrating the usual city holidays with great enthusiasm. For example, on September 26, 2011, the program of the evening was

[416]However, the selection of music for all city clubs is made by the same member of the Jewish community, who comes from Dnepropetrovsk. Perhaps this is the reason for the fact that in the evenings of different clubs often sounds similar music.
[417]The revival of the traditional Jewish community in Germany.

simultaneously devoted to the Jewish New Year and the city day. After the summer break, club evenings, as a rule, are very popular. On one occasion, in the presence of representatives of the Jewish community, a song in Hebrew was sung and the audience was frankly bored. One of the members of the club did not fail at this moment to sarcastically remark to another one: "*And this is the day of the city*!?" (I eto den' goroda!?). But after the departure of the representative of the community, the program dedicated to Odessa began. There were poems, anecdotes from the stage. One of the participants read the story of writer Dina Rubina – "*How I love Odessa!*". At the end of the formal part of the program, a television show about the Odessa humor followed. And finally, there were traditional songs, dances, and snacks.

Such a contrasting attitude to the holidays (the Jewish and city ones) demonstrates that the feelings of urban patriotism are prevailing over the patriotism carefully cultivated by the Jewish community in relation to the "historical homeland" – Israel, and the Jewish traditions. I will give one more example from the September evenings, at which both the Jewish New Year ("Rosh-ha-Shana") and the city day (Odessa) were celebrated. On September 11, 2012, in the evening of the Odessa club there were, again, leaders of the Jewish community in attendance. After the audience commented on the Jewish New Year and the representative of the community left the hall, the president of the Odessa club reminded the natives of Odessa that today they celebrate the *City Day* as well. The audience reacted loudly to this announcement with – "*It's about time*!" (davno pora!). In this part of the evening, formal and somewhat artificial statements regarding the Jewish New Year were replaced by emotional praises of Odessa.

First, the hymn of the city[418] sounds and the president of the club follows it: "*Dear friends, on September 2, there was a holiday in Odessa. We all, being here, celebrated this holiday. Our city is 218 years old, the city that we all love. The city that I consider one of the best in the world. After this short film, I'll say a couple of words that disturb me."* This is followed by the collective screening of an amateur film with views of Odessa, shot by a friend of one of the activists of the club back in 2000. The visual imagery of the city's views is accompanied by the speech of the author of the film: "*The Southern Palmyra and simply Odessa-Mama! The sun and the sea. Our gentle Mommy. We wish you well, as a human being - and let us be healthy for you too*! (My zhelaem tebe, kak cheloveku i chtoby my tebe vse tozhe byli zdorovy)".[419] The gathered Odessites support the author of a short documentary film shouting in the spirit: "*Our beloved*

[418]The hymn of Odessa is "Song of Odessa" from musical "White Acacia"
[419]This phrase composed in the style of the "Odessan language" is a typical wish or a toast.

Odessa!" One of the guests of the club opposes: "*Kiev is also a beautiful city*!" But it is blocked by the exclamations of the dominant Odessites: "*No Odessa is the most beautiful*!" Following the film discussion of the current situation in Odessa, demonstrates the importance of electronic media in the life of emigrants. "*Dear friends, this is yet our Odessa,"* the president of the club, Michael Misozhnik, continued referring to the demonstrated film:

> "*I want, it is my personal opinion, to share with you what we are facing on the Internet every day. It's too painful for me! It hurts me when our city is now called Donbass-Odessa.*[420] [Those sitting in the hall are worried]. *It hurts when there is now shooting, killing, and all this in our Odessa!*[421] *It hurts me to see how the beautiful Arcadia was taken from Odessa and it turned into a paid beach.* [...] *It hurts me when they sell to some bandits the seaside, where we used to run, swim, and sunbathe as kids. And in general, all are bandits. From the mayor to the governor. You know, maybe it's also our fault. As Zhvanetskiy said: 'Guys, 350 thousand of you left, your place is occupied.*' [...] *I think that despite this, we will still celebrate our holiday - the birthday of the city. We wish those Odessites who live there now happiness and patience. Let's drink to our city!"* (man, 67 years old).

Those gathered toasted glasses of Kosher wine, provided by the Jewish community, with great enthusiasm – or, glasses of vodka, which they bring to the evenings themselves. Clearly, the audience was moved by the events discussed, but not only news available on the Internet gives translocal specifics to the life of emigrants and the activities of the clubs. The Berlin club of Odessites officially considers itself a branch of the Worldwide Club of Odessites. This status determines the popularity of urban topics, but it is not the only factor. The relations between clubs assume a constant exchange of congratulatory messages (on the occasion of the city's day or anniversaries). On especially significant days (for example, the 220th anniversary of the city), attempts are being made to establish a video link with the club in Odessa via Skype. Many Odessites live for their native city news, which they are often more worried about than events taking place in

[420]This evening was held before the beginning of the modern conflict in eastern Ukraine. Misozhnik is dissatisfied with the regime of the former president, Viktor Yanukovich, a native of Donbass. It is a form of marginalization and provincalization of Odessa. In Ukraine, the region of Donbass was known to be marginal "working-class suburbs".

[421] Referring to a number of high-profile killings and clashes between criminal groups.

Berlin. Electronic media and digital television, which made news widely available[422], have become a powerful resource to support such a lifestyle.

One more project of the *Worldwide Club of Odessites* should be mentioned, through which its leaders tried to mobilize transnational and translocal networks of Odessites and city clubs. The idea of "nationwide fundraising for the monument to Isaac Babel" belonged to Valery Hait, vice-president and current director of the *Worldwide Club of Odessites*. In February 2007, the club "appeals to Odessites and everyone who loves Odessa and its great literature, with a proposal to participate in fundraising." At the end of the project, its authors stated that: "*As expected, Odessites, wherever they live today, have expressed strong support for the idea of raising funds for the monument to their great compatriot*".[423] Among Odessites who donated personal funds for the creation and installation of the monument were many migrants living in Germany, as well as members of the Berlin club.[424]

Ideologically, the project appealed to local patriotism and the fact of the active participation of many emigrants in it demonstrates that these feelings are still alive, and the mobilization of transnational networks of Odessites can be very successful. On 4 September 2011, the inauguration ceremony of the monument to Isaak Babel solemnly took place. "*Babel returned to Odessa*", said Mayor of Odessa Alexei Kostusev, "*Babel was returned to our city by the love and gratitude of Odessites to the great writer whose works have long been considered a literary visiting card of Odessa in all countries of the world.* [...] *Many thanks to all Odessites from different parts of the World without whom this monument, this holiday would never have taken place*".[425]

[422] Like different television programs, films, serials etc.
[423]The monument to Babel. The project chronology, https://www.odessitclub.org/index.php/zhizn-kluba/proekty-vko/pamyatnik-babelyu.
[424]The list of Odessites and those who love Odessa and Babel contributed to the construction of the monument, https://www.odessitclub.org/index.php/2-uncategorised/1449-vnesshie-sredstva-na-sooruzhenie-pamyatnika-babelyu
[425]The monument to Babel. The project chronology, Ibid.

Monument to Isaak Babel. Odessa, October 2016.
Photo by S. Huseynova

Odessites are not ill-connected emigrants scattered across many cities and countries. The activity of the city clubs has contributed to the fact that the imagined urban community of Odessites became a transnational one. Now, precisely this form is perceived as a norm and it has become a key element of discourse, emphasizing the uniqueness of this community. On the one hand, within the framework of the modern Odessan myth, it has been argued that Odessites, like no other community, are *thinly dispersed around the globe.* On the other hand, it is emphasized that the *dispersion* does not prevent them from being patriots of Odessa. The most important function of the city clubs is to convince Odessites of that notion and produce discourses and myths of solidarity, using as a resource the sense of local belonging.

The Worldwide Club of Petersburgers:
A Popularization of Local Heritage for Europe and the World

In the list of goals for establishing of the *World Club of Petersburgers* one can find an orientation toward "*supporting links with the natives of St Petersburg living permanently outside the city, their descendants*".[426] Initially, at the time of the club's creation, this was declared as one of the main goals. But later, it lost its relevance and did not play an equally significant role as it did for Odessites. Of course, since the collapse of the USSR, tens of thousands of Petersburgers have left the city. As in Odessa, many of them and their families were ethnic Jews[427], which made emigration much easier. However, the intellectual elite of the city was much more numerous and ethnically diverse than in Odessa. The population of St Petersburg is several times larger than the population of Odessa. The number of *native* Petersburgers has certainly decreased, but not in such a dramatic way as in Odessa. As a result, when the troubled 1990s had passed, the main goals of the club acquired a slightly different connotation and shifted the Petersburgers' participation from the problems of the *fate* of their city to the "*revival of St Petersburg as a spiritual, intellectual, scientific and cultural center*".[428] The ideological program of the club is very emotionally described by its current president, Mikhail Piotrovsky:

> "The point is, what motivates us is a great love for our hometown – the love, with all its worries and hopes. This is the feeling of the Great City that appeared where no one builds cities – a city in a swamp that was predicted to have perished and can drown at any moment if we do not take care of it. The touching affection of people inhabiting St Petersburg not only keeps it 'afloat,' but also makes it one of the most beautiful cities in the world".[429]

In the 1990s, Petersburg was going through hard times. Of course, this was the situation throughout Russia and, more broadly, in the post-Soviet space. But it is in St Petersburg, with its difficult climate and huge number of architectural monuments in need of restoration and protection, that those years are described in particularly dramatic tones.

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[426]The club yesterday and today, http://www.wwclub.spb.ru/rus/o-klube/klub-segodnya-i-vchera
[427]By 1989, 19% of all Russian Jews lived Leningrad (Tol'ts 2012).
[428]The club yesterday and today. Ibid.
[429]For comparison, in the case of the Odessa club, it is more relevant to remind that for Odessites, ethnicity and place of residence are not important. See: "With love to St Petersburg to save the soul of the city...", http://www.wwclub.spb.ru/

"*In the 1990s, the city was practically in ruins. Everything was being destroyed right before our eyes*".[430] In addition to the gradual improvement of the economic environment, two events contributed to changing the situation: the coming to power of Vladimir Putin, who became a member of the club and more than once declared himself as a Petersburger[431], and the 300th anniversary of the founding of the *Northern Capital*. Although the city and now faces numerous challenges with the conservation of cultural and historical heritage, the situation is fundamentally different. St Petersburg is once again a dynamic, developing metropolis, attracting a huge number of tourists.

For the creators and members of the club, their hometown is undoubtedly a unique city not only for Russia but also *for Europe and the world.*[432] Its *worldwideness,* indicated in the name of the club, is determined precisely by this characteristic of wide influence, and not by a *smearing of Petersburgers in a thin layer on the globe.* That is how, over time, the epithet *worldwide,* that was initially a simple copy of the name of the club of Odessites, was reconsidered. The club in Leningrad was in fact created by analogy with the *Worldwide Club of Odessites*. By circumstance, Mikhail Zhvanetskiy who lived and worked in the *Northern capital* for a long time in the Soviet years, directly participated in its creation. The chairwoman of board of the club, Valentina Orlova recalls those events as follows:

> "*In 1990, I worked as the executive secretary of the 'Revival Fund of Leningrad'. It used to be a public foundation, which organized and conducted the telethon 'Revival'.*[433] *And the purpose of the foundation was to raise funds for the maintenance of monuments: for the revival, or perhaps repair, or reconstruction of architectural monuments and sculptures of Leningrad. And this telethon* was aired *for 24 hours, from the 6th to 7th of January on Christmas Eve.* [...] *And at the same time, in November* [1990], *Zhvanetskiy established the 'Worldwide Club of Odessites.'* [...] *And when we heard about it, we thought we could also create a club of Petersburgers, and an initiative group was created. It was the director of the* [museum] *Peterhof- Znamenov. It was, now he is already Russia's Master*

[430]V., man, aged 71, May 2017 S. Huseynova, Field Notes.
[431]"Wherever I am, whatever I do, I always feel like a Petersburger, a Leningrader". See: Speech at the Ceremony for awarding the title "Honorary Citizen of St Petersburg", 12 June 2006. http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/23638
[432]The club yesterday and today. Ibid.
[433]The 24-hour international telethon "Vozrozhdenie" (Revival) was organized by the first mayor of Leningrad, Anatoly Sobchak, in order to draw attention to the problems of the city. The collected funds were intended for restoration work.

Herold and vice-director of the State Hermitage Museum, Vilinbakhov. It was the writer Cherkashin and me [Orlova].[434] *And so, we teamed up and began to think about how to create something for us, too. But since we are all people of culture, we decided that this will be a club dealing with cultural and educational activities. This is the main thing! [...] And with this idea we came up with the telethon. The guest of the telethon was Zhvanetskiy and we asked him to read aloud our idea. And at three o'clock in the morning, at the piano in the lobby of the Mariinsky Theater, Zhvanetskiy and I approached a microphone together and, in my opinion*, *throughout* 37 *countries of the world, he declared: 'The Pitertsy*[435] *of all countries, unite!' And I briefly told about our idea. And what did we want? First of all, we wanted to unite all Petersburgers scattered around the world in this club. Secondly, we wanted to create a club of interesting interaction so that people would come and* [...] *unburden their heart, because that was a cold, hungry, uncomfortable time and there were queues in stores. At that time, the most deprived and unprotected was the intelligentsia. To meet, take tea, talk, listen to interesting people. That was our second task. And the third task, in which we have placed high hopes, was to educate the younger generation. Because we realized that even more defenseless were the children* [...]. *We decided that the kind of Petersburgers we will raise will be our life in the future. So, we decided to support talented, outstanding children, to organize their after-school leisure. And it has become one of our main programs.* [...] *And now just imagine, on Christmas Eve in 1991 in the city of Leningrad was created a club. Zhvanetskiy suggested the name – 'Worldwide Club of Pitertsy'. Since the plea was: 'Pitertsy of all countries unite!' We came together at our first meeting and the first thing that those gathered said was that they do not want to be Pitertsy. They wanted to be Petersburgers. In*

[434]Vadim Znamenov, born in Leningrad, is a historian and for many years a director of the Peterhof State Museum-Reserve (Peter the Great's country palace), https://peterhofmuseum.ru/news/2015/614
George Vilinbakhov, also a historian born in Leningrad, and the vice-director in charge of research at the State Hermitage Museum, https://web.archive.org/web/20110707131457/http://sovet.geraldika.ru/part.php?id=11#biography
Gennady Cherkashin, a writer and journalist, was born in Sevastopol and came to Leningrad after graduating from secondary school, for study at the Physics Department at Leningrad University, https://www.livelib.ru/author/150975-gennadij-cherkashin
Valentina Orlova, was born in the Far East, graduated from the library department of the Leningrad State Institute of Culture, named after N. K. Krupskaya, http://www.wwclub.spb.ru/rus/o-klube/chlenyi-kluba/o/orlova-valentina-trofimovna. As already mentioned, Gennady Shmakov – "a mate" of Brodsky and Volkov, Orlova and Cherkashin are interesting examples of integration into the community of Petersburgers through acquiring a higher education in the city and inclusion into urban intellectual circles.
[435]It comes from an informal abbreviated name of the city.

the city Leningrad was born a club of Petersburgers!" (woman, 66 years old, St Petersburg, January 2014).

The founders of the club possessed the social capital necessary to attract intellectuals widely known in the city to the club. In turn, after becoming its members, cultural experts increased the authority of this urban institute. The management system was built by analogy with the same club of Odessites. Its first president became Nikita Tolstoy – the son of the writer Alexei Tolstoy. His candidature could not have been more relevant to the idea of reviving the history and culture of the imperial "*golden age*". By the end of Perestroika, the nobility that was forgotten and almost destroyed in Russia could once again openly raise their voices. Now, there was no need to hide their titles, but rather, the titles translated into additional social capital. The first president of the club was, according to Orlova, "*In general, he was a real count. We called him a simple Soviet Count Tolstoy.*" After the death of Tolstoy in 1994, Mikhail Piotrovsky, one of the most famous intellectuals in Russia and the director of the State Hermitage, was invited to become the president of the club. The practice of inviting famous Petersburgers with social capital or political influence was extended not only to the board but also to the club's members. One of the club's first members was the mayor of the city, Anatoly Sobchak. It was in his administration that President Vladimir Putin, another well-known member of the club, began his career.

At the time of foundation, and in early years of its work, such organizations are faced with two key matters, whose solutions will determine the organization's potential to last. Firstly, it is necessary to have at its disposal a permanent premise to develop a program of activities. Secondly, the club must find its own identity and niche. Prior to the allocation of a permanent premise, from city authorities, for the *Worldwide Club of Petersburgers*, support came from different institutions. Members of the club met once a week on Wednesdays in the "Center of Architecture", before convening for a while in a room at the Mariinsky Theater. Now, the club is located in one of the new buildings on Vasilievsky Island.

Gradually, the club became a public platform, which regularly hosted intellectuals taking part in the construction of the St Petersburg discourse and popularization of the cultural and everyday history of the city. The first permanent club program was called *Petersburg Evenings*: "*It was just immersion in the St Petersburg culture, in the silver age. Well, a lot of topics have been covered. Actually, this is how the club works –*

organizing such intellectual meetings." [436] After launching the program *Star of Prometheus* – "*international contest for young talents*" in different areas (music, journalism, etc.), the club developed more permanent programs and currently implements up to 17, only one of which – and far from the most important – is dedicated to "*Russian émigré community*".[437]

The list of programs emphasizes the specifics of the club's activities, aimed primarily at the participation in the cultural life of the city. The club undertakes publishing activities, producing four literary almanacs and a series of books devoted to different topics related to the city. It conducts competitions and awards several literary prizes: *Nabokov Literary Prize*, *Bookworm*, and *Baltic Star*. It continues the tradition of *creative evenings for members of the club*. The club's programs "Connect a torn thread" (an essay contest for schoolchildren about their families' stories) and "St Petersburg through the eyes of the youngsters" express continued interest in *forming a new generation of Petersburgers*. In this area, the club actively cooperates with the "City Palace of Youth Creativity",[438] According to one of its employee:

> *"Here is a project – the city competition for guides – schoolchildren. The conference 'Multinational Petersburg' is a whole series of competitions for connoisseurs of Petersburg! This year we have a contest 'Imperial Petersburg'. That is the diverse activity with schoolchildren, whom we, together with the club* [of Petersburgers], *are trying to introduce to the heritage of St Petersburg through various forms of work: research and excursion, through mass competitions, developing games.* [...] *And with the 'World Club' we are already summarizing the results of these projects. The 'World Club' helps us and allocates a prize fund. From what is published by* [the club]: *a library, calendars – that's what helps us to work. In addition, we have a youth section of our 'World Club'. As a result of our major competitions and conferences, we annually admit, for their achievements, the best, most engaged, creative guys to the youth section of the 'World Club of Petersburgers'. And they are actively involved* [in club work]" (Vladimir Axelrod, man, 74 years old, a member of the *Worldwide Club of Petersburgers*, St Petersburg, January 2014).

[436]Tatjana, woman, aged 66, member of the *Worldwide Club of Petersburgers*, St Petersburg, January 2014.
[437]*Worldwide Club of Petersburgers*, Programs, http://www.wwclub.spb.ru/rus/programmyi
[438]One of the imperial residences, where the 1920s "Leningrad Young Pioneers Palace" is located. See: "About Palace", http://www.anichkov.ru/

Although, it is no longer the political and administrative center, St Petersburg claims the status of a cultural capital, and the heritage concentrated in the space of pre-revolutionary Petersburg is significant not only for Petersburgers. It has an honored role in literature and in the Russian historical narrative, in discourses and myths of the former greatness of the Russian Empire. The vast majority of the club's activities are aimed at popularizing this heritage, both among the young generation of St Petersburg and outside the city. To this end, the *Worldwide Club* organized several so-called *retreats* in Moscow, London, Berlin and New York, coinciding with the 300th anniversary of the city. It participated in the organization and holding of festivals in various cities.[439]

The main annual event is the '*Solemn Assembly*', to which the prominent intellectuals of the city, government representatives, consuls, and journalists are invited. The Assembly clearly demonstrates the specifics of the *worldwideness* of the club, significantly distinguishing it from the Odessa one. According to journalist and press secretary of the club, Tamara Skoblikova-Kudryavtseva, at the Solemn Assembly of 2016, dedicated to the Club's 25th anniversary, *"The club clearly confirmed its 'universality'. And yet the appearance of Mary Krueger impressed me. 'Have you really come from Washington?' – 'Of course I made it. Would you have difficulty finding many free communities in the world that exist for 25 years? I'm proud of our club'. Mary Kruger, Consul General of the United States of America in St Petersburg from 2004 to 2008, joined the Worldwide Club of Petersburgers back in 1996 ... I remember the wonderful evenings we held together with the American Consulate."*[440] The popularization of the *worldwide* significance of the local cultural heritage is aimed at the fullest participation of intellectuals, politicians, and businessmen from all over the world, rather than unification of emigrant-Petersburgers.

[439]For example, in May-June 2018, the VII International Festival of Contemporary Art of St Petersburg "Bridge of Friendship" was held in Narva. http://wwclub.spb.ru/rus/sobyitiya/20181/most-druzhbyi1

[440]Skoblikova T. The Solemn Assembly of the *Worldwide Club of Petersburgers*, http://www.wwclub.spb.ru/rus/sobyitiya/2016/torzhestvennaya-assambleya-vsemirnogo-kluba-peterburzhczev42

"After all, you and I are Leningraders": Club Life in Berlin

The composition of the international members of *the Worldwide club of Petersburgers* refers to the same cultural specifics. The collective members are two times fewer than in the *World Club of Odessites*, and there is only *the Club of Petersburgers of Chicago* on their list of affiliates, four out of seven of which are located in St Petersburg.[441] *The Berlin Club of Leningraders* is not included in the list , and it was created by analogy with *the Berlin Club of Odessites*, becoming the second city club established within the Jewish community of Berlin. By the 2000s, strong ties and contacts had been established between many emigrants from Leningrad / Petersburg living in Berlin. Like Odessites, they were acquainted in a wide variety of places; for example, they visited various *integration clubs* operating under the Jewish community and the ZWST. As a result, the first attempt of mobilizing to create the city club was very successful. Moreover, the initiative came not only from Leningraders but also from the leaders and activists of the ZWST. Therefore, unlike Odessites, the Leningraders did not have to search for a permanent place for the club's activity. The first chairman, Leonid Berezin, describes its conception:

> "*We organized ourselves in 2005. Under Mr.* [Joseph] *Vardi* [director of the ZWST] *there was a group of Bayramovs, Bella and Adik Bayramov.*[442] *They tried to organize us. They organized some artistic activities. This was all on Oranienburger Strasse.* [...] *And well, we who visited* [the community] *were brought together. Adik Bairamov called everyone, got us together. About twenty of Leningraders.* [...] *Mr. Vardi was invited to the meeting, and he said: 'Dear friends, such a well-liked city* [Leningrad] *and there is no club. Here is the Odessa club, but you do not have any.* [...] *How do you feel about that idea to create the club of the Leningraders?* [He said,] *that this city and memory of it deserve it and many people love it, and continue to love*.' *Well, let's get organized.* [...] *And for the club, it means there must be some kind of a board, a team, a chairman, a deputy, a distribution of responsibilities, a treasurer, and some contributions must be collected.* [...] *And for the next time, we met with Adik. And people who were there decided to choose Berezin as a chairman.* [...] *After a while, they advertised*

[441]Collective Members of the Club, http://www.wwclub.spb.ru/rus/o-klube/kollektivnyie-chlenyi-kluba
[442]*Married couple* from Baku, activists of the Jewish community of Berlin.

and now it was a meeting in the hall 'Mifgash',[443] *where it was said that* [...] *the Leningrad club would work. Let's arrange the date for meetings. And they gradually began to meet"* (Leonid Berezin, 84 years old, first chairman of the club of Leningraders, Berlin, April 2016).

After a while, over 150 Leningraders living in Berlin became members of the club. As in the case of other such institutions, it was headed by people with the necessary social capital. "*It was such a core, it was such a Leningrad elite, the intelligentsia! Everyone with higher education, with degrees. And despite their age, they were so active. They lived it. Today they have all grown old. Back then they brought color to emigration, they became a family*".[444] The average age of the club's leaders and its members is slightly higher than in the Odessa club or the Baku club – the "*youngest*" one. "*The club of Leningraders is probably the oldest one, about 5 years ago, they all danced the cancan, and now, as you see* [grown old]."[445]

All members of the club have lived most of their lives in Leningrad. Most left their hometown in the 1990s, not yet accustomed to its new name. In families, the memory of the war was always a lived experience, and many of the members of the club also survived war in childhood. The Blockade is the most important site of memory for Leningraders: the large-scale commemoration of the Blockade refers to the memory of Leningrad, but not to the image of Imperial Petersburg. These Leningraders were born and lived not only in the cultural capital but also in the hero-city.

Feelings of nostalgia, made more powerful by emigration, would send them back to memories of everyday Soviet life. It was in marked contrast to the way of life to which they, gradually and with varying degrees of success, got accustomed in Berlin. All these circumstances contributed to the choice of the name for the club. According to Elena Lurie:

"*Each city, especially a large city, has its own mentality. And people coming from this city they are looking for their own* [people]*, especially, at this age.*[446] *It is very difficult for them to be integrated, that is, almost impossible. They remain the same as they were. And they are looking for a sense of community* (chuvstvo

[443]The hall on Oranienburger Strasse "Mifgash" (Hebrew, Meeting).
[444]Elena Lurie, woman, aged 56, a member and artistic director of the Club, November 2014, Berlin.
[445]In conversation with Mikhail Komm, a musical director of the project "Zion" of the Jewish Community. (man, aged 58, March 2012, Berlin). Huseynova S. Field Notes.
[446]That is, older age groups.

loktja). *Especially prominent cities! Leningrad, in general, is a pedantic, northern, and cold city.*[...] *Leningraders, they are special. I am myself a Leningrader. That's why I know it. It is natural for Leningraders to communicate much more to each other, than with a southerner.*[447] *This is a completely different temperament. This is a completely different mentality. I'm not talking about interests anymore.* [...] *I knew someone who fell into a terrible depression due to emigration. And it was the club that filled this gap. Because one could talk about the city, find mutual friends. Literally walk the streets, you know, walk down the Leningrad streets. And, of course, Leningraders and Odessites, probably, are the most attached to their city. Moscow can't inspire that. Well, it* [Leningrad] *is a big village! In fact, Muscovites, they almost do not exist. They all came from somewhere. In contrast, Odessite and Leningrader, it is incredible, it's inside! I would never say – I'm from St Petersburg. I'm from Leningrad. You see, this is a Leningrader!* [...] *It's probably in the skin, in the blood. You see. Therefore, for them it* [the creation of the club] *was very important!* [...] *Well, first of all, they have lived most of their lives in Leningrad. Besides, we have one favorite song.* [...] *"After all, you and I are Leningraders, we know what war is".*[448] *You see, one can't get away from it. I was born in a blockade family, but, of course, after the war. And this* [the memory of the war and the city] *is still with me!* [...] *I don't even know how to explain this.* [...] *Well, first of all, Leningrad is a special city.* [...] *It was built in spite of everything.* [...] *I mean the foundation of the city in the Petrine times. It was always a city in opposition, because of all the revolutions, all the uprisings were always in St Petersburg. It was always the aristocracy and the intelligentsia. This city is cold and uptight, but always maintains its reputation.* [...] *You know, such Petersburg aristocracy* [...], *who never went out in a robe. That is, it* [being a resident of St Petersburg society] *was an accomplishment* [...]. *Every old woman, for example, I remember, had her own seat in the Philharmonic.* [...] *The fact that groceries were bought at a certain store. It was "my" store. Well, there was something in this* [...] *You know, the smell! That was the taste of Petersburg. You will never confuse it with anything.*

[447]Meaning primarily Odessites.

[448]The first version of the song (1979) written by Maks Dahie (lyrics) and Victor Pleshak (music) is known as "The Song of Leningradki" ("After all, you and I are Leningradki") (female Leningraders). In its late version the song has been redesigned into a more general version "After all, you and I are Leningraders". See: "Song of Leningradki", http://www.sovmusic.ru/text.php?fname=pesnyal4

The citizen of any other city will tell you the same thing. But that is not true! Because among Leningraders it is so exacerbated. I do not know what this is about. The wild patriots, absolutely all! I left [St Petersburg] *a long time ago. It no longer hurts, except when I see Petersburg, not the present one. I cannot see this decorated Petersburg! It is there* [pointing to the chest] *it hurts!* "(Elena Lurie, woman, 56 years old, club member and art director, Berlin, November 2014).

Perceptions of the urban habitus allow Leningraders to distinguish between members of their community and residents of other cities. In different contexts, the categories *Leningrader* and *Petersburger* can act as synonyms, or oppose each other. But precisely while trying to describe the habitus of a "*real*" member of the urban community, the category *Petersburger* becomes most relevant. Such an approach allows most sharply to define the boundaries of the urban community, and its differences from Odessites and Muscovites. The ideal collective image of an aristocratic, always well-educated and intelligent Petersburger also contrasts to some extent the typical perceptions of the Soviet man. As a result, the use of the self-designation *Petersburger* expands this urban community beyond the collective category of "the Soviet people". At the same time, the most important sites of memory – the war and blockade – are associated only with the category *Leningraders*, which remains relevant despite the renaming of the city.

The geographic and climatic essentialist constructs, peppered with discourse of the "*uniqueness*" of the native city, and caused by a sentiment of *wild* local patriotism, remain in high demand to explain the "*otherness*" of Petersburgers/Leningraders. Such an emotional attitude to the hometown as Elena Lurie's inevitably influences the content of the club's program. If we look at the document entitled "The concept of the activities of the Club of Leningraders," drawn up by its board members, it becomes clear that this is a purely Jewish diaspora organization.

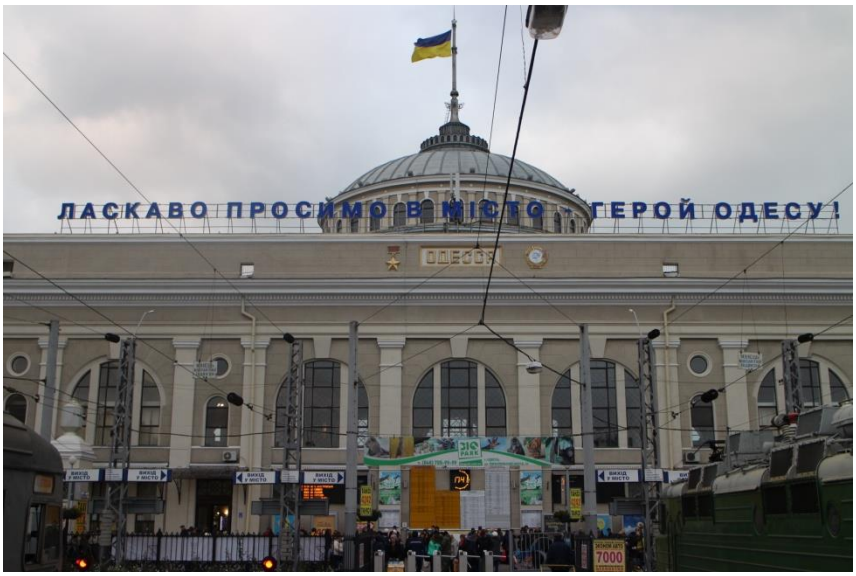
Among the 15 points which list the goals of its activities, there is not a single explicit reference to the hometown. According to this version, all thematic evenings are built around the discussion of interesting events for emigrants, or historical overviews about the host country and the "historical homeland" – Israel. Such topics are traditionally present in the club's program, but according to activists, the club's key goals are presented completely differently from other city clubs. Earlier in this chapter, Elena Lurie talked about the *feeling of community* and an opportunity to immerse in the atmosphere of memories of a *beloved* hometown. According to Leonid Berezin:

"*The first direction is the issues dedicated to the history of Leningrad, commemorative dates, and lives of people inhabited in this city. The second direction – it is necessary to integrate into German life, of course, that is, the life of the country where we have ended up. And the third direction is related to the history of Jews, the Jewish people, historic events, and the most significant holidays. We have to explore this side of life as well, since we, the majority of us, are members of the* [Jewish] *community*. [...] The *plan of activities* [...] *eventually appeared*. *That is, the date, the topic, who is in charge of the event. Either it is a lecturer, or a concert, or some other meeting dedicated to the life and work of a famous figure tied to St Petersburg or Leningrad, or related to the history of the city's foundation … Usually* [...] *we celebrate the day of the city foundation*, *or the Blockade, which we also commemorate every year. Besides, we started to hold retreats. For example, visiting memorial cemeteries.* [...] *on the occasion of the annual anniversary of the Victory Day*, *or country excursions, or boat trips*" (Leonid Berezin, man, 87 years old, the first chairman of the club of Leningraders, Berlin, April 2016).

The club was not only supported by the Jewish community, as was the case with the Odessites, who created their club long before cooperation with the ZWST. The Leningrader club's very creation was initiated by the ZWST, an organization perceived by migrants as an integral part of the Jewish community. This level of cooperation implies an inevitable and heightened interest in Jewish-Israeli topics. However, the most memorable events for the informants are the meetings dedicated to characters or stories connected with Leningrad / St Petersburg. The Leningraders attend the club meetings, primarily, *for the very purpose* of plunging into a familiar atmosphere, turning to memories of their native city, and once again having a sense of urban patriotism.

Official Ritual and Everyday Traditions:
The 9th of May in the clubs of Odessites and Leningraders

"We always celebrate Victory Day / We will never forget this day / on Victory Day here, in Berlin every year / Odessa club is celebrating and singing!",[449] wrote poet Semyon Aledort, one of the prominent members of the Berlin Odessites club, whose poems tell a lot about the club's events. In his book, a special place is given to holidays and memorable dates related to World War II and the rituals of celebration that were brought by Odessites from their hometown.



Odessa main railway station. The sign "Welcome to Hero City Odessa!" is above the Gold Star Medal. Odessa, October 2016. Photo by S. Huseynova

Certainly, dates related to the memory of war are not the sole contents of the Odessites' and Leningraders' "holiday baggage". A number of the most popular holidays are related to the history of Odessa and St Petersburg (city day, "Yumorina", etc.). Besides Victory Day, there are a few other holidays that are popular among both Russian-speaking migrants and in most parts of the former USSR: including, New Year's

[449]Cited poem is titled "Vitory Day". It is among other Aledord works with notable titles dedicated to the memory of the war: reading, "To the 60th anniversary of Odessa Liberation", "Picnic dedicated to 60th anniversary of Odessa Liberation", etc. The book *Odessa, lighten us forever* was published in 2013 and presented to me by its author. As mentioned on broadside, "This publication of the author is bibliophilic, numbered". Not all original information necessary for the hyperlink is reflected in the book. For this reason, I classify this poem collection as field material.

celebrations on the 31st of December and, related to this date, the so-called "Old New Year"[450], as well as International Women's Day on the 8th of March and, maintaining its popularity, Labour Day (as it was called in the USSR) on the 1st of May.

These holiday traditions acquired new rituals in Berlin long before the clubs, and Odessites, Leningraders and Bakuvians do not celebrate these dates only at their club parties. They also like meeting in various restaurants considered Russian or Ukrainian (familiar cuisine, vodka, favourite songs and dancing, of course). Only the 9th of May differs, with its not-to-be-missed official ceremony that reflects public collective rituals celebrated in St Petersburg and Odessa. The focus point of this section is Odessites and Leningraders in Berlin – in particular, the ritual of Victory Day celebration in their city clubs. Analysis of this event outlines important aspects of these organizations.

Firstly, it establishes the internal variety of Russian speaking migrant communities in Berlin, all socialized in the Soviet era. For example, though it is one of the important and popular days for Odessites and Leningraders, 9th of May is less relevant for Bakuvians. Military operations did not reach the territory of Azerbaijan SSR. Furthermore, the memory of World War II was considerably displaced by the events of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict of the post-Soviet period (1988-1994).

Secondly, the official ceremony of the 9th of May celebrations allows Odessites and Leningraders to feel part of the broader Russian speaking community. On that day, an emotional connection between cities and countries celebrating the event is actualized as well. According to chronologist Alexei Miller, it was impossible to exclude communism from the national history of Russia, because "the central part of national mythology is given to Victory, whereas all the neighbours except Belarus and South-Eastern Ukraine lack this" *(Miller 2012: 333).* Finally, the 9th of May makes for a unique case where natives of Odessa and Leningrad enter into a relationship with Berlin – the new city of their residence – and wider Germany, their host country.

There are a number of Great Patriotic War veterans among club members.[451] For all those who did not personally participate in the war (the majority), a strong commitment to celebrating Victory Day is often related to family memories. At the same time, the stable functioning of the holiday or mourning ritual also arises from collective memories

[450]One of the most popular holidays that survived the USSR collapse and appeared due to shift from Julian to Gregorian calendar in 1918. It is celebrated on the night of 13January. In Aledort's poems, one can find many memories about this date: "Friends! Dear Odessites! /Toast: "To Old New Year! / Let us be well-drunk and well-fed! / Let us grin broadly! And despite the weather / Our club leads ahead, to progress! / To this Old New Year! / "To us! To the club! And to Odessa!" ("Old New Year in "Lux" restaurant").
451 I will use this name of World War II accepted in the USSR and narrate about Leningraders not Petersburg natives, as informants themselves think in such terms.

of Odessites' and Leningraders' communities or from purely personal emotions or family memories alone. It can also be variously connected with official policy of war commemoration in their hometowns and homelands.

According to Kristel Lane, Soviet-era Victory Day differed from the mass celebration of 1st of May (Labour Day) and the anniversary of October Revolution of 1917 by two important aspects: "The formal side of the holiday, the public rituals, were more decentralized and occurred on a much more modest scale." In Soviet time, the holiday had a powerful informal side, such as the visiting of cemeteries and tombs. Moreover, besides the all-Union Victory Day, there were various dates related to particular cities and communities: "local Victory Days or Days of Liberation". Although such celebrations are run according to scenarios similar to the all-Union one, they have their own specifics (Lane 1981: 143-144).[452]

Such specifics of celebrating individual commemorative dates are obvious in the cases of Odessites and Leningraders. Each of these communities had a war of their own, and therefore retain their own holidays and commemorative dates related to those events. One of the main holidays for Odessites is the 10th of April – "Day of City Liberation from Fascist Occupants" of 1944, and for Leningraders it is the commemoration of the Blockade (September 1941 – January 1944).[453] These dates are also celebrated in emigration, as both clubs carry out their activities under the auspices of the Jewish community in Germany. Because most members are ethnically Jewish, the war is commemorated on the Holocaust Memorial Day as well.

As a result, 9th of May Victory Day is one among other important compulsory holidays for migrants from these cities, while being the one common to everyone (including Odessites and Leningraders) (Körber 2011: 130). There are ceremonies and rituals that are habitual for celebrating this event in Odessa and Petersburg, which have

[452] About commemoration of war in the USSR and first post-USSR years see: (Tumarkin 1994: 95-228).

[453] Leningrad (St Petersburg) and Odessa were awarded the status of "hero-city" in 1965 on the first formally celebrated 20th anniversary of war in the USSR (Koposov 2011: 93-94, 102-105). On this day, only 12 cities and the Brest fortress were honoured with this status (See: Zubakov 1981; Korotkov and Yakubenko 1975). Discussion of events during the Blockade is given an important place in narrations about the city and community of Leningraders/St Petersburg natives. "When I hear the word 'Leningrad' – I remember the Blockade" writer Lev Uspenskiy underscores in his memories (1970: 384). Lev Lurie calls the Blockade "Leningrad Holocaust" (2014: 227-236). In the post-Soviet tradition of war, commemoration day of Blockade raising – 27th of January – became an official "Military Glory of Russia Day". Numerous monographs dedicated to the Blockade days, as well as to their commemoration in post-war Leningrad, have been published. For example, see: (Reid 2011; Kirschenbaum 2006).
The defence of Odessa in 1941 is a lesser but still a widely known episode of war, and this event is absolutely a significant memory for Odessites, where the image of Odessa is inscribed as a hero-city (see, for example: Azarov 1962; Korotkov and Yakubenko 1975). The day of Odessa's liberation is celebrated annually as a holiday.

experienced some inevitable changes in the migrant communities. Reconstructing compulsory traditions, rituals and ceremonies for annual celebration of Victory Day, established in their hometowns long ago, Odessites and Leningraders, in a certain sense[454], stand for continuity in time, and connection with the recent historical past and their places of origin.

Procedures of reconstruction amount to attempts to "maintain" traditions in considerably different political, social and cultural contexts where amendments to familiar rituals are actually inevitable. The main question that I attempt to answer in this section is best posited this way: how does the new migrant context affect the traditions of the celebration of Victory Day? To answer this question, it is necessary to underline specifics of the context of living in the capital of Germany – "the defeated nation". One of the important symbols of victory in the war – the Reichstag – is located in Berlin. Here, in this city that was divided into Eastern and Western parts less than three decades ago, two various projects of World War II commemoration intersect.[455]

Evening in the Berlin club of Odessites dedicated to "May 9".
On the screen, footage from a documentary – The Capture of Reichstag,
a symbolic moment of "victory" in the Soviet myth of the Second World War.
Berlin, May 2014. Photo by S. Huseynova

[454] Here, I assume an allusion to the popular collection of articles "Creation of traditions" edited by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger is obvious (Hobsbawm 2003: 1-3).
[455]More likely that after reunification there are even three projects, if we mention the large Holocaust memorial in Berlin, for instance.

Victory Day is one of the most obvious examples of *imported* holidays. A major part of Germany officially celebrates the end of the war on the 8th of May. A part of the Eastern German (former GDR) population remembers the 9th of May as well (Scharnowski 2010; Berger 2012). In Berlin, Odessites and Leningraders are faced with both these traditions and contribute their own at the same time. In any case, the intentional meaning behind the celebration of this day for migrants from post-Soviet countries and Germans differs in nature. Odessites and Leningraders celebrate "our" victory rather than the end of the war. The question is, how this ritual is arranged, and tradition celebrated in emigration.

Berlin studies, as a source of local context, provide certain opportunities to this end. There are several places of commemoration and tombs of Soviet soldiers located in the capital of Germany (Flacke 2003), giving Odessites and Leningraders quite a range of opportunities for celebration (and thus, reconstruction) of habitual public rituals and the tradition of celebrating Victory Day. Among them, the ritual of visiting memorials, both in official groups (with state authorities or embassy representatives) and individual and family visits, retains its significance. Hundreds of Odessites and Leningraders residing in Berlin are united in networks and take part in their city clubs – institutions of their own creation. Membership in clubs and transnational networks facilitates habitual holiday rituals as well as the reconstruction of collective sympathy traditions around memorable events of worldwide significance. Victory Day is given special meaning among such holidays, as it is celebrated in the capital of the "defeated Reich". Taking local context into consideration, the 9th of May inevitably becomes a holiday with a set of rituals that causes discussions and even heated arguments among migrants.

Whether or not an activist or club leader has any status within these discussions is determined by their social standing in emigration, which is directly related to their achievements in their native towns. The more considerable their social capital, the more chances they have to be accepted and recognized by migrants from their city of origin. They also need to be knowledgeable about memorable dates, which bring their fellow migrants together, as they bear the responsibility of organizing ritual action that creates some continuity with tradition. How should 9th of May be celebrated in Berlin, and what are the "correct" public and "noisy" representations of "our" victory over Germany, in the country where Odessites and Leningraders now have residence status? Even the Jewish community, for the most part, prefers to express sorrow over its Holocaust victims around these memorable days, more than to celebrate the surviving veterans' soldierly

triumph. There are many divergent opinions among migrants. Therefore, event facilitators have to consider both context specifics and a variety of opinions.

This tension is not simply a diversity of opinion, but is concretized in rituals of celebration, such as loud boat parties versus sombre moments of silence. Thus, for these migrant clubs, May 9th celebrations in Berlin exemplify a contested context, or a lack consensus on public-facing symbols and practices. Getting back to Appadurai's idea of "shifting images that meet deterritorialized viewers" (2005: 3-4), it should be mentioned that the practice of commemoration dates, Victory Day amongst them, becomes *deterritorialized* as well. Odessites and Leningraders not only attempt to maintain these rituals and traditions in emigration but also know that they reconstruct them in unison with representatives of their community worldwide. Victory Day goes far beyond Leningrad and Odessa locales, and is now a memorable date globalized by Odessites and Leningraders. It is a place of memory where unity and solidarity of city communities turned transnational and translocal are reconstructed. Odessites and Leningraders emotionally live this holiday via collective regular watching of documentary films. As members of migrant communities, they visit memorials in Berlin. As *deterritorialized s*pectators residing in Berlin, they also become the participants of an annual ritual action taking place in their hometowns.

Why are memorials so important? According to Aleida Assmann, "The special mission of memorial places in time and space is the return of particular event of past to present" (2006: 217). For transnational urban communities, such meaning can be observed in the reconstruction of their own past in various "non-native" local contexts. Often, the researcher hears very similar descriptions of lifestyle in emigration from different informants. For example, in February 2014 at a birthday party in one of the Russian restaurants where several dozens of Odessites (and others) were gathered, I heard again the phrase that "Odessites live here [in Berlin] the way that they lived in their hometown. They live here as if they are in Odessa" (woman, 65 years old). Considering the importance of memorable dates related to the war, the possibility of collective or individual and family visits to memorial or memory places in Berlin lets them reproduce (or simulate) their lifestyles in Odessa or Leningrad.

Evening dedicated to the Leningrad Blockade.
Berlin, January 2012. Photo by S. Huseynova

Memorials are critically important. The existence of such places in Berlin is a resource of habitual collective and public and rituality of the 9th of May. If such places did not exist, Victory Day would be celebrated only in enclosed spaces within the framework of commemoration events limited to Jewish communities, restaurants, or private residences. The visiting of monuments makes it possible to preserve the tradition to its utmost extent. In a certain way, it lets migrants preserve the feeling of participation in the official ceremonies arranged in their home country. When traditions create a stark contrast between migrants and their receiving community, it necessarily broadens the ritual beyond individual and family memory. Certainly, migrants' meanings and style of Victory Day celebration differ from the ones accepted for Memory Day in Germany.[456] But the fact of official celebration and holiday from work on the same date (enforced by the hosting country) makes this difference less important. In fact, it is one of the few traditional commemoration days for Odessites and Leningraders when they feel certain engagement in memorial traditions of the hosting country as well.[457]

[456]It would be relevant to note as Avner Ben-Amos says: "Each political regime has, therefore, to construct its own version of the past, which becomes the official memory of the state" (Ben-Amos 2004: 4). It is impossible for the state to intervene on the narratives of ~~on~~ Odessites and Leningraders in Berlin. Several generations would need to pass, before this memory could ever be finally displaced.
[457] Other than Victory Day, the 8th of March (International Women's Day) and 1st of May (International Worker's Day) are still celebrated in Eastern Berlin.

Attempts to (re)construct traditions and rituals related to commemoration of war events in migrant communities are of interest in more extended frameworks of researchers in memory politics. British social researchers of war commemoration – Ashplant, Dawson, etc. – have noted that the last two to three decades of the 20th century were marked with fast global spread of interest towards "the forms and practices of war commemoration", the cultural and political aspects, as well as the phenomena of memory of war. Among the reasons, they see interest arising in memorialisation of the events of the Holocaust (the researchers prefer the term taken from Hebrew – *Shoah*) in Israel, Germany and the USA.[458]

At the same time, this interest in the memory of war goes beyond the commemoration of the Holocaust, as not only the Jewish but most other social groups suffered and were injured in wars. "Social groups suffering injustice, injury or trauma that originates in war have become increasingly prepared to demand public recognition of their experience, testimony and current status as 'victims' or 'survivors'" (Ashplant, Dawson & Roper 2004: 3-5). Holocaust events become salient in a new way for Odessites and Leningraders in emigration. However, the status of "war heroes" still outweighs the status of "victims".[459] The difference in attitude is also reviewed in traditions of celebrating Victory Day (even wider, in memory of war) formed in rituals of visiting of war memorials, etc.

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[458]Andreas Huyssen in his turn notes that "Memory discourses accelerated in Europe and the United States by the early 1980s, energized primarily by the ever-broadening debate about the Holocaust (triggered by the TV series *Holocaust* and, somewhat later, by the testimony movement) as well as by a whole series of politically loaded and widely covered fortieth and fiftieth anniversaries related to the history of the Third Reich". Such interest in the Holocaust moves him to speak about the *globalization of Holocaust discourse* (Huyssen 2003: 12-14).

[459]I can find confirmation to my observations in the work of Karen Kerber, who says: "In the case of Russian speaking Jews, the 'Great Patriotic War' is a central place of collective commemoration". She also points out that in most parts of the community there are various narratives about the celebration of the 9th of May, while the generation of war participants demands to celebrate this event in public. "They have their chests decorated with their awards, as well as songs about the Victory Day that they sing together, raising Russian flags during the ceremonies". From the point of view of native Jews [Alteingesessene] this date doesn't only shift the focus away from Holocaust victims but it also serves for external legitimization and empowers Russian speaking Jews in the Community while supporting negative stereotypes towards Germany as hosting country. Kerber cites the following passage from the interview with a member of the Russian Jewish community: "The question is not about the victory of one dictatorship over the other one. Thousands, hundreds of thousands of Jews fought in the Red Army because if Hitler had won all Jews would have died. The Jews did not have another choice. They fought for their lives and their families against social nationalism. What would happen to the Jews if the Russians lost the war? Who of the Jewish community would survive? No one. Unfortunately, when we start discussing it, German Jews do not understand us". As a result, parallel to the image of victim dominating in the community until recently, we can also hear memories about Jewish soldiers who fought fascism and liberated their people (Körber 2011: 130-133).
It is reasonable to agree with most of these observations. Along with the label of "Russian speaking Jews", the spirit of the group leads to the construction of a homogeneous joint community where it did not exist before. Certainly, there are many episodes that unite "Russian speaking Jews", especially in emigration. At the same time, it is a heterogeneous environment, and research of war memory demonstrates how the events of 1941-1945 were salient in various extents t for Odessites, Leningraders, Muscovites, Bakuvians, etc.

As one of my interlocutors mentioned: "*We are children of war. That is why the Victory Day is a very important holiday for us and we should celebrate it properly*" (man, 80 years old). The study sets out to focus on collective events, however it should be mentioned that considering the age of migrants for whom this holiday still preserves its actual continuity, most do not have an opportunity to participate in public events, as their health does not permit them. For those who are still able to take part in events traditionally attended in the USSR, the celebration of the 9th of May starts from collective visiting of memorials. I begin with Leningraders and the Berlin-based Leningraders club. One of its leaders and most prominent activists describes the 9th of May as following:

> "*The first place to be visited on the 9th of May in Berlin is the monument of Soviet soldiers at Brandenburg Gate. It is such an intimate and such a popular place in Berlin. The march starts. Representatives of embassies go first. First of all the Ambassador of the Russian Federation and his colleagues, [i.e. people escorting him] who lay beautiful wreaths. The representatives of related or close countries follow him. Ukraine, Belorussia, Hungary, England. Actually, all of them. They lay wreaths as well. Ambassadors and counsellors stand there. And what about us? In the past we went with clubs from ZWST* [Zentralwohlfahrtsstelle der Juden in Deutschland], *nowadays we visit the monument with the Jewish community as well. Its Chairman* [i.e. Chairman of Jewish community], *the Chairman of the veteran's club and other clubs. We all meet at Brandenburg Gate and then go to the official ceremony. We pass everyone, approach the monument, lay wreaths and flowers. We greet representatives of some embassies, shake hands with them. Then we leave this place. This is what the official part looks like. There is a reception arranged at the Embassy of the Russian Federation. It is a huge building on Unter den Linden, there are two big halls and the tables are served with snacks, vodka, wine, fruits on one of them. A lot of food and beverages. Some of the representatives of other embassies also participate in this reception. The Ambassador will say a speech* [...]. *The concert will be arranged in the second hall where rather well-known artists from Russia will perform their program. Sometimes medals or memorable awards are handed out at the reception. We are invited to sit in the hall and watch the ceremony of awarding Great Patriotic War participants*" (man, 83 years old, migrant from Leningrad).

It is natural that not all the members of the Leningraders club receive an invitation for participation in this official ceremony. Primarily, the invitees are the leaders and more prominent activists, as well as members of the Veterans club, i.e. persons who have necessary social capital that lets them mobilize other members of their community for participation in collective action. They can call themselves "native Leningraders" and are accepted in this status by other community members. As a rule, direct participants of the war, primarily veterans, are also invited to such events.

The ritual of visiting the memorial is given a special status, as the whole celebration starts with this event. This symbolic action defines the attitude and meaning of Victory Day celebrations. Commemoration of victims (all memorials are also mass graves of soldiers and officers) is not only grief for their loss but also tribute to the memory of the heroism of those who fell but won. The location of the memorial accepted as the "main one" is also important. It is situated in the symbolic centre of modern Berlin – close to the Reichstag, the government block and the Brandenburg Gate. The ability to arrange public formal ritual in the city centre enforces its symbolic meaning, creating the atmosphere of recognition of special status for former Soviet citizens by the authorities of the hosting country. There are also more mundane reasons for the collective visit to this memorial: it is located in close proximity to all embassies and relatively close to the building of the Jewish community where the club members come together. As a result, symbolic relevance of time and place is completed by its immediate accessibility for all participants.

The ritual itself reproduces habitual tradition – the laying of flowers and wreaths, a moment of silence. Considering the status of the mass grave, it also resembles the habitual cemetery visits from life in Leningrad and Odessa. The chance of joint participation of all migrants and embassy officials is even more significant than the traditional ritual. Social distances in migration often change. On the one hand, most migrants (especially educated people) lose their career, their environment of colleagues and friends and neighbours who recognize their social status. On the other hand, being in emigration, they may find themselves attending a reception arranged with the participation of authorities from their homeland. In their "past life", many Leningraders or Odessites could not even dream of such close attention or proximity to valorised community members. There are not many such individuals (especially veterans) in Berlin, and all of them get a certain amount of personal attention from the embassies of several nations simultaneously. A formal reception that follows the visit to the memorial is at least officially arranged for the "children of war" – people who have personal memories

of those days. Such signs of respect shown by the embassies simultaneously represent non-fading attention from the homeland[460], boosting the migrants' self-esteem.

Another specific related to 9th of May commemoration is that during the visits to memorials, and while performing of habitual rituals, the distance between migrant and receiving state becomes shorter. The air of Berlin is permeated with "old" (pre-migrant) memory of Leningraders and Odessites, and the memorial no longer belongs to someone else, ceasing to be a symbolic place in an alien city. Rather, it gets imbued with new meaning and personal memories of Leningraders and Odessites and becomes a commemoration place of their own. In this case, the process is intensified by the fact that the memorials were dedicated to events important for the migrants and were in fact constructed by the effort of the victor country – the USSR.

Another considerable aspect is that memories of the annual celebration of Victory Day are steeped in mourning, even as they are called a holiday. Having paid tribute to the memory of heroes at a memorial, the migrants continue their day with celebratory feasts and concerts, and what is more important, live interaction. Each collective meeting is a chance to see one another and to be among "their own people", in a crowd with similar urban habitus. Such meetings allow them to reconstruct habitual everyday life of their homeland. The duality of the holiday is encapsulated in this aspect – recognition via official public ceremony generates a feeling of involvement in the host country (Germany). Paradoxically, an opportunity for collective communication in an emotional atmosphere of memories of events that played a great part in the life of Leningraders and Odessites, and their families, lets them reproduce and support their own hermetic microworld in emigration, and keep distance from the hosting community. I.e. on holiday events that continue and finalize the formal ceremony that starts from visits to memorials, cultural distances and borders are reproduced, and holiday festivities are a common part of the program.

> *"Usually we celebrate this day in a very formal way. We've sailed on a boat or celebrate in a restaurant. We dance a lot! It is necessary for us to greet veterans. Clubs would send them postcards or greet them in person. And then we would lay flowers at the monument of a Russian soldier in Treptower Park and in Tiergarten where the tanks are. Then we would follow to the Holocaust monument. Our bus would be full. We would lay flowers on this memorial also.* [...] *Veterans' club,*

[460]In this case, Russia is associated with the former USSR, i.e. with common motherland for all who survived the war.

Odessites' club, and the Russian embassy usually greet us, on behalf of Mr. Putin and Mr. Medvedev. My husband is lieutenant colonel of the artillery. He was awarded on the 60th and the 65th anniversary of Victory here in the Embassy. Usually, meetings at the Embassy are arranged in a formal way. The tables are served after the formal part: artists, concerts, dancing. There was solyanka, 100 grams of vodka, shchi [traditional Russian soup of cabbage], *pelmeni served. A great concert was arranged on the 65th anniversary of Victory and there were a lot of military people invited from European countries. Polish, French, Italian officers. Mr. Medvedev came to the 60th anniversary and personally awarded my husband with a medal. Later I recorded this video from RTR-planet TV channel*." (woman, 75 years old, Odessite).

Visiting a memorial would not be so easy to remember without the subsequent holiday feast and performance, as well as the participation of high-status persons representing respect and attention of the homeland to its migrants. The 9th of May could blend in with many other holidays without the participation of home country ambassadors and well-known government officials, despite the fact that there are a number of symbolic indicators of war in the ritual part of the holiday (military men, shots of vodka, etc). A collective "march" by bus to all the relevant commemoration places is organized, but not every year, and bus excursions usually take shorter routes. "Marches" take place more rarely and depend on activity of club leaders and the Jewish community that varies from year to year, as well as on anniversary dates. However, we can observe a level of importance in the order of the visits to memorials. The Holocaust Memorial is the last one, whereas the well-known complex located in Treptower Park is in strong competition with the monument at Brandenburg Gate.

"*In the past, we used to rent the 'Hansiztic' boat, back when* [Yuriy] *Kurilskiy was the head of the Odessites club* [first chairman of the Odessites Club in Berlin]. *He was the one who arranged everything on a high level. The captain of that boat was his friend and he permitted us to bring food, wine and whatsoever to their restaurant. For courtesy we ordered some water and beverages there, too. More than 100 people took part! Seven hours sailing in the channels singing and dancing. Those were the celebrations we had! Then we went to lay flowers either at Treptower Park or at the Soviet War Memorial near Reichstag. But then that captain was transferred to a seaport and we could not arrange* [such celebrations]

because no one allowed us to bring food and beverages. We used to rent other restaurants, they were not that expensive, we paid 10 Euro per person and celebrated the holiday there. Once we celebrated in a Russian restaurant, as we were too old to sail on a boat. We hire a bus, arrange a city tour and go to Treptower Park or to Reichstag. […] *It is the 9th of May! It should be celebrated either on the 8th or on 9th of May. Germans celebrate on 8th of May. There are many Germans in Treptower Park on that day. City authorities also celebrate it. And we celebrate on the 9th of May.* […] *from the first day of club establishment* [2001]. *Among Soviet holidays we always celebrate 9th of May and 1st of May. We combine these days: 10th of April – Liberation Day of Odessa, New Year, 8th of March, 23rd of February* (Soviet Army and Navy Day) – *we used to celebrate those days in the past but do not do it nowadays. Sometimes we celebrated 7th of November* [Revolution]" (man, 76 years old, Odessite).

The 9th of May holiday is one in a large system of memorable dates established in the Soviet period. Most Soviet holidays that were publicly celebrated have preserved their significance within the city clubs. However, all informants described Victory Day as a special holiday, and its importance is promoted by Russia first of all. The 9th of May was made the central focus of commemoration policy in the post-Soviet period and especially in Mr. Putin's and Mr. Medvedev's years. Odessites and Leningraders who get an invitation from the Russian embassy in Berlin observe the rising interest in this memorable date from year to year. Those who do not get to attend a reception in the Embassy feel an influence of these memory politics held in Russia and Germany via official greetings. For those not invited to the Embassy, the clubs arrange collective visiting of memorials, and in some cases celebratory get togethers (especially in recent years) are arranged with the support of the Jewish community.

"*This tradition has been formed for years. Clubs always visit the memorial by themselves. They do it on their own. We arrange a great party here in the big hall* [the Jewish Community's premises on Oranienburgerstrasse] *and invite everyone. Sometimes clubs unite their events, for example, Kiev and Leningrad rent a boat with music, poems, songs for 3 hours after visiting Treptower Park and laying flowers. In the period of* [Iosif] *Vardi* [former leader of ZWST Berlin Unit] *we never arranged evenings in the big hall, and now we are planning to celebrate it for the second time. In the beginning, we arranged amateur performances – we*

sang war songs, read our poems, set the tables, came with our flags and medals. Later, most of those who came got offended because I wasn't able to give the stage to all of them. That's why on the second year we invited professionals, they played for us and sang war songs. We greeted veterans with flowers. We hung a screen on the side glass wall of this hall. Scenes from the war were projected on this screen. And now they can sit, dance, sing, and there is a war going on the side. I think it is a very powerful moment." (woman, 56 years old, migrant from Leningrad).

A tradition of visiting memorials and laying flowers is preserved as voluntary. Clubs do not impose or enforce the visits to monuments and following rituals, but still undertake organizational duties. Without a certain group of activists that undertake this work as volunteers, and without the clubs, visiting the memorials would be of individual or family nature, i.e. Odessites and Leningraders who value such visits and flower laying as mandatory tradition. The memory of war is relevant in migrant life across all communities. Most Odessites visit evenings arranged by Leningraders, natives of Kiev or Moscow and vice versa. Besides that, they celebrate common habitual holidays in their communities at least three times a year (Victory Day, Holocaust Remembrance Day and the city anniversary's related to the war). Evenings in the clubs are held no more than once a month, whereas the frequency of holidays related to the war memory is rather high. Within the Jewish community, such holidays and evenings that are not directly related to the history and traditions of imagined community of Jews, become the prerogative of Soviet migrants. The migratory flow of most Odessites and Leningraders is more strongly associated with broader frames of the USSR history and is less connected to Jewish tradition. A previous head of ZWST Iosif Vardi, a citizen of Israel, remembers:

"*Once I was in the club of Kiev natives. The subject of the evening was dedicated to some synagogue in Kiev. They maybe haven't ever seen that synagogue. They haven't been there for sure. And when the presenter had spoken, the head of the club suddenly said: On that day our troops advanced on Dnepr… I had a headache after that evening and got more white hair*".

"Our" war, "our" victory, "our" troops – is the life tradition connecting migrants from different post-Soviet cities in Berlin. It is a part of memory and traditions emotionally close to Odessites and Leningraders brought to emigration. Indeed, narratives

about the Holocaust are emotional for them too, though as a rule, it is not "our" Holocaust, it is the "Jewish Holocaust". A current and comprehensible tradition of visiting memorials steeped in the memory and discourse of "our" reinforces ownership of memorials of Berlin. In terms of associative relevance for Soviet migrants, a Holocaust memorial is perceived as more abstract and not "ours". It is a memorial dedicated to Jewish people who died, and although most migrants self-identify as a part of the Jewish community, the holidays of "our" mourning, referring to the history of "our" Great Patriotic War, are most strongly related with other events. The different associations of the war adjoin with various habits of celebrating and commemorating historical dates. At the same time, a migrant experience often forces gradual reconsideration of some habitual traditions. "There is Katusha in our community, she always puts on her medals. But two other men do not"[461] (man, Odessite, 76 years old).

As discussed in this section, public representation of the attitude toward the holiday of Victory Day stirs up lively discussions and even arguments. The host city context – the capital of defeated Germany – gradually lessens publicity of military holidays. However, orientation to collectivity is preserved. The same is true of the clubs' practices, although they still preserve collective gatherings. Instead of a public and noisy celebration of Victory Day on board a cruise boat on the Spree and channels of Berlin, Victory Day is celebrated in more solemn public and private spaces of the Jewish community or in restaurants, and they grow more closed with the passing of time.

> "*I had a talk about it... A young German woman had an interview with me recently. She presented herself as a journalist.* […] *She liked my interpretation of some cases and she asked me: What do you think of 'your' people… sometimes putting on their awards on Victory Day? I said I was ashamed. Ashamed! In Russia, you are welcome to do it. In Israel as well. But in Germany, me as a German citizen who participated in war… For the time being, we are searching for other ways. We shouldn't mention it. The wisdom is to leave something unsaid in family life, with a close friend, with children and moreover with relatives. One should know what should be said and what should be left unsaid… There was an old man sitting here. He does not like it here* [in Germany]. *I ask him why he moved to this country. "I conquered this country!" he said. I can't take his side, I felt ashamed, offended and trembling. Of course, Germans show their interest, visit us, they*

[461]Veterans put on their awards only on holidays. They do not put on their orders and medals in everyday life in Berlin.

know everything and do things right. We cannot do it, we should have a heart. When in Rome, do as the Romans do, my dear. If I come over to your place I should show admiration. Of course, we may not like something. But to say do away with this!? I will not say that, because it would be impudent. Knowing not to cross a red line is important in life, in any life. And we should realize that all nations should advance together. This is not hollow words or propaganda, it is a necessity" (man, 83 years, activist of the Jewish community).

Integration into the host community is more and more often perceived as entailing a rejection of some traditions and habits. Among them, special attention is paid to the 9th of May celebrations. The public demonstration of victory symbols seems inappropriate for more and more numbers of migrants. With these developments, collective and individual visits to memorials are the only remaining rituals that do not stir up controversy. The significance of memorial sites and rituals associated with their visits increases as migrants gradually reject other possible modes of a habitual Victory Day celebration. This holiday is also increasingly special for the reason that it is gradually becoming the only public one. The memorials are not visited on other dates of military significance for Odessites and Leningraders. The Blockade and Odessa Liberation days are local holidays. They are considered particularly migrant holidays, possessed by each community respectively. There is no official format in the receiving country, and such days are celebrated internally, within the individual transnational urban communities.

Memorable dates related to the war preserve their significance in the post-Soviet migrant communities at large, and to the greatest extent, for people of elderly age groups that retain their personal memories about the war. Holidays and mourning are performed in a collective format as a given. However, each community has its own local memory about the war. Both Odessites or Leningraders remember the war in different ways and construct holiday and mourning rituals in diverse ways. Traditions that celebrate the local dates noticeably differ from the holiday that is common for everyone – the Victory Day. The main difference is in arrangement of the formal part, and the 9th of May warrants particular attention as it is preserved not only as personal but also as a national and public holiday.

"Bakinets" in Baku:
Nationalization of the city and community

The international cultural society "Bakinets" was established in the capital of Azerbaijan almost a year after the appearance of the Worldwide Clubs in Odessa and Leningrad. Such a delay may be attributed to the migration and political situation prevailing in the Republic and in the city. Baku experienced much more tragic transformations in the years of Perestroika than those of Odessa and Leningrad. The disintegration of the USSR, accompanied by the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, led to dramatic changes in the composition of the population of Baku. The city lost a huge part of its pre-Perestroika inhabitants. Odessa and Leningrad were fled mostly by ethnic Jews and members of their families who took advantage of new opportunities for migration. Baku was fled not only by Jews but also Armenians, as well as many Russians, frightened by the conflict and rapid nationalization of the republic. They were joined by other Russian-speaking natives of the city, including many ethnic Azerbaijanis. At the same time, Baku was rapidly ruralized, taking in masses of the mostly rural population. In the situation of remarkably rapid dispersion of Baku natives and the transformation of the socio-cultural landscape of the city, some, who called themselves the Baku intellectuals, tried to preserve the urban community. They attempted to develop and popularize the myth and discourse of the imagined community of Bakuvians and their unique city.

> "It is such a city, Baku – an open door to all people. Even if they entered it with tanks.[462] And Bakuvians considered themselves, without false modesty, special people in the kindest and most sublime sense of this word. Workers, internationalists who are able to make friends and have fun, enjoy the sun, the sea and each other. They greet any stranger as an honored guest and never leave anyone in trouble. It is such a unique brotherhood of people who unmistakably recognized each other, wherever they met. It seems that Maksud Ibragimbekov[463]

[462]Before the collapse of the Soviet Union, during moments of aggravation of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, Soviet troops were introduced several times into the city. But the author of the lines, first of all, hints at the events of January 1990.

[463]Maksud Ibragimbekov is a Bakuvian, a well-known scriptwriter, and writer. It is difficult to say whether Ibragimbekov really is the author of such a statement. But the metaphor of nationhood in describing the Baku community was widespread and popular among the natives of Baku and could be borrowed from the domestic discourse by Ibragimbekov himself.

was the first one who spoke about this very comprehensively and accurately: Bakuvians are a special nation, without distinctions as to nationalities inside it".[464]

The situation in Baku began to change only by the end of 1987, at the beginning of the Perestroika and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. But by 1991, the dramatic changes in the habitual urban socio-cultural landscape were perceived by many Baku natives as irreplaceable losses. The fewer the "true" Bakuvians who remained in the city were, the more importance they received in the Russian-language media. However, the reasoning about a special breed of people – that is, true-born internationalists – was much weaker in the capital of the national republic, which had recently survived ethnic pogroms. Bakuvians were not dominant in the city anymore, and no resources existed to revive *the old atmosphere*. The speed of the changes that took place became a serious obstacle to the mobilization of Bakuvians. "It's understandable and natural for former Bakuvians to be nostalgic. But here are present Bakuvians living in their native city who also remember with nostalgia how it was before. And this is already unnatural and therefore alarming".[465]

In order to overcome this alarming feeling caused by the rapid dissolution of the community, various cultural experts were turning not only to the past of the city but also declared the task of constructing transnational networks. Bakuvians who left their hometown for a long time and achieved considerable successes in emigration were increasingly becoming heroes of journalistic publications. As, for example, Aza Rakhmanova – professor of medicine: "I have been living in Leningrad for thirty years, but I will never stop being a Bakinka!".[466] At the beginning of the 1990s, local patriotism carried through space and time, and became the most important characteristic of the Bakuvian: "But she [Rakhmanova] has one more, incessantly valuable and most important 'title'– she is a Bakuvian".[467] Urban patriotism was constantly fueled by testimonies from abroad.

"This beautiful city on the Caspian Sea, emigrants who settled in the Israeli town Haifa wrote to the Baku newspaper, had always been different from others. The people who inhabited it were free from national prejudices, it never mattered to

[464]Ganelina T., O Baku i bakintsakh. Nostal'gija po... budushhemu // Newspaper "Bakinskij rabochij", 17 fevralja 1991 g., s. 3.
[465] Ibid.
[466]Muhina Z. "Ne perestanu byt' bakinkoj". Rubrika "Nashi zemljaki"// Newspaper "Bakinskij rabochij", 17 ijulja 1991 g., s. 4.
[467] Ibid.

them how you pronounced the letter 'r'[468] […] genuine internationalists. There were no Azerbaijanis or Jews, Russians or Georgians. Its population was a special nation – Bakintsy – kind and humane people".[469]

"If you were lucky enough to be born in Baku – Bakuvians from the Israeli Netanya went further – wherever you live, no matter how far a destiny has delivered you, you will remain Bakinets forever".[470]

The need to establish some kind of institution was perceived in the context of the Baku discourse as a natural response to the dictates of time. One may safely affirm that the very decision to create the society "Bakinets" was influenced by and accepted under the impression of the same Worldwide Clubs of Odessites and Leningraders. Initially, the founders of the society used a well-known slogan: "Bakintsy of all countries, unite!" According to one of the initiators of the society, an employee of the publishing house, Sharg-Garb Fikret Zarbaliev:

"The idea of creating a society was, let's say, in the air. Our city, steeped in the spirit of an unusual brotherhood, became the birthplace of a unique nation – the nation of Bakintsy, the people traditionally distinguished by genuine internationalism, wherever they lived. And for a long time already it should have been organized into a society that would bring all Bakintsy together, people who love their city."[471]

The Society Bakinets was registered on November 1, 1991, and the Constituent Assembly held on November 6. The first president of the society became Chingiz Ismailov, the first deputy head of *The Caspian Shipping Company,* while Fikrat Zarbaliyev was elected Director General. At the same first meeting was "Elected the Presidium of the Society consisting of 21 people: lawyers, journalists, artists, athletes, employees of enterprises and organizations of Baku."[472] In other words, members were natives of the city who possessed the necessary social capital, allowing them to claim the

[468]Stereotype perception of Jews.
[469]Pejsachenko M. Nashi korni - v Baku. Reshili: nado ob"edinjat'sja // Newspaper "Bakinskij rabochij", 10 janvarja 1992 g., s. 3.
[470]Fel'dman Je. Esli ty rodilsja v Baku... // Newspaper "Bakinskij rabochij", 8 aprelja 1992 g., s. 3.
[471]"Bakincy vseh stran, soedinjajtes'!" // Newspaper "Bakinskij rabochij", 16 nojabrja 1991 g., s. 1.
[472]Dzhalilov A. Zhivi, "Bakinets"! // Newspaper "Bakinskij rabochij", 22 nojabrja 1991 g., s. 3.

right to represent the community of Bakuvians. Initially, trying to identify the key tasks facing the society, its creators also replicated the experience of *the Worldwide Clubs* of Odessa and St Petersburg.

> "The main goal of the International Cultural Society 'Bakinets' is networking, establishing strong links with Bakuvians, living both in their native city and outside of Azerbaijan, and also abroad"[473]

The very ambitious plans of the society's early years indicate an optimistic mood among its leaders. They hoped to realize "a wide cultural and educational work",[474] organizing concerts, exhibitions, telethons and much more. It was assumed that members of the community who had left the city would be involved in this program, supporting it financially. "That's what we want", the president of the society said, "to revert to a nice custom of such Bakuvians as Zeynalabdin Tagiyev – a charity". Here, the goals of the society differed little from those declared by the Worldwide Clubs.

However, the leaders of The Bakinets Society tried to go beyond their plans. They also were counting on the creation of various joint ventures, which would be financed by the same foreign Bakuvians. The leaders of the society have not concealed their extensive commercial plans, and have tried to mediate in the launching and implementation of transnational projects. The creation of a transnational network of organizations was perceived as the first step in this direction. "We are pleased to know that the 'Bakinets' Association has also been established in New York, with which we intend to co-operate."[475] The obvious desire to commercialize the project of the unification of Bakuvians across all countries distinguishes this society from the Worldwide Clubs, as the latter did not go beyond the search for funding for cultural projects.

But this was not the main difference. Of course, in their statements, the leaders of "Bakinets" paid special attention to solving the city's problems. The *multinationality* of the Baku community was underlined, as well as the openness of the society to representatives of all ethnic groups inhabiting the city. However, "Bakinets" was created and run mainly by ethnic Azerbaijanis, and since its inception, it was closed to Baku Armenians. In the situation of territorial conflict and the growth of radical nationalist sentiments, the deeper ethnicization of society was inevitable.

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[473]"Bakintsy vseh stran, soedinjajtes'!" Ibid.
[474]Ibid
[475]Ibid

> "Our main task is to care for our home Baku, the city in which a special nation – 'Bakinets' was formed. The rooted Bakinets, nurtured on the traditions of the ancient culture and customs of the Azerbaijani people, got all the best of the representatives of other peoples living in Baku – benevolence, openness of the soul, generosity [...] We intend to give wide publicity abroad to the achievements of Azerbaijani science, culture, art."[476]

In this new discourse, constructed by the intellectuals of "Bakinets", the Azerbaijani component was given a dominant role. Primarily ethnic Azerbaijanis became the Bakuvians. They are distinct from other members of the ethno-nation due to the fact that they had absorbed good knowledge of the traditions of other peoples, while not forgetting their ancient national customs. This tendency has only intensified over time. In the first issue of the newspaper *Bakinets*, irregularly issued until 2000, Armenians had permanently disappeared from the list of nationalities inhabiting Baku.

> "'Bakinets'- how proudly and majestically [it] sounds! Probably majestically because it unites not only Azerbaijanis but also representatives of many peoples and ethnic groups who had the luck to be born and to live in this blessed and sunny region. [...] On the pages of 'Bakinets' we will tell you not only about the problems and successes of our republic, but also about the life and activities of the Bakuvians living in a strange land. Besides, with your help, we are aiming to break the information blockade of Azerbaijan. We expect, spreading 'Bakinets' all over the world, to tell people the truth about the war in Karabakh, about the history of Azerbaijan and Armenia. The interests of Azerbaijan so require you and therefore your interests, compatriots".[477]

Subsequently, the issue of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict dominated in the newspaper of the society. The tone of the publications became more and more like calls for the mobilization of the ethnic diaspora rather than the urban community, whose members were largely free of national prejudices, by comparison. The urban community was deprived of its specifics and discursively reconstructed into ordinary residents of the capital of the national state: "Bakinets is a newspaper for all those whose homeland is

[476]Ibid.
[477]Editorial board. Salam, sootechestvennik! // Newspaper "Bakinets" #1, nojabr' 1992 g., s. 1.

Azerbaijan", was a blanket statement declared by the members of its editorial board, devoid of specifics or exclusivity.

Even the motto chosen for the newspaper did not refer to Baku and its urban community. Rather, it quoted the odic composition of the main Soviet Azerbaijani poet of the Stalin period – Samad Vurgun – "Devoted to you forever in song! Azerbaijan, Azerbaijan!!" The poem, titled "Azerbaijan", was written by Vurgun in 1935, and no special attention was given to Baku (Vurgun 1977: 102-104).[478] This approach has contributed to the rapid transformation of The Bakinets Society into an Azerbaijani one. From its original objectives, nothing remained but the name. As a result, after many years of such activity, even a person who calls himself a true Bakinets questions the need for creating the Bakinets Society, and more broadly, implementing the program for the preservation of the urban community. According to the well-known writer Natig Rasulzadeh:

> "Baku has a huge aura. [...] I'm an old Bakinet, I'll tell you that. I.e., I was born here, my father, my grandfather was born [in Baku]. We are all Bakintsy. The generation of Bakintsy. [...] But, probably, this aura extends to true Bakintsy. To people who cannot live without Baku. [...] The second, but it is also included in the first point, is a person who loves Baku very much. [...] This is the true Bakinet. Probably there are a million definitions, but, in my opinion, love comes first. [...] Since 1993, I was one of the first who received the 'Humay' award.[479] And at first, it was kind of a good idea. But I am critical about it [the creation of the Society Bakinets]. It creates some isolation, a division. As if Bakintsy are kind of elite, and the rest are fools? Why then is there no Shekinets, Lenkoranets?[480] There is only 5-10% Bakintsy left. In the Soviet time, there was the division too. Indeed in our school, I do not remember that there was anyone but Bakintsy. All were Bakintsy, 90-95 percent. And now, it's just the opposite. Therefore, when he

[478]It's enough just to compare this motto with the Worldwide Odessa News's one: "Odessites of all countries, unite!" Its ~~author~~ initiator is not a Soviet or national poet. It is the most famous representative of the Odessan community and the president of the club - Mikhail Zhvanetskiy. His motto which appropriates and refashions Marx's famous call to proletarians, and emphasizes the non-ethnic specifics of the Odessan community, became the motto for the club's website as well. See: Gazeta dlja vseh odessitov, https://www.odessitclub.org/index.php/vsemirnye-odesskie-novosti/2109-von-103
The motto pronounced on the main page of the Worldwide Club of Petersburgers is authored by another president – Mikhail Piotrovsky. This motto emphasizes the urban character of the club and does not refer to any national themes. See: "By loving St Petersburg to save the soul of the city ...", http://www.wwclub.spb.ru/
[479]Awarded by *The Bakinets Society.* See more below.
[480]The natives of small towns in Azerbaijan.

> [Fikret Zarbaliev] now awards, how can he award only Bakintsy? And the others, did they not contribute? Of course, they did. Therefore [...] the authorities do not encourage him" (Natig Rasulzadeh, 64 years old, Baku, July 2013).

Unlike the Worldwide Clubs, The Bakinets Society does not receive any broad support from the authorities. The authorities are aimed at national homogenization of the republic and the capital, and the Russian-speaking community of Bakuvians does not fit within this framework. In turn, already from the 1990s, The Bakinets Society gave priority to national patriotism over local urban patriotism. The Society was nationalized, practically since its establishment. In addition to attempting to establish contacts with other organizations created by Bakuvians in the United States, Israel, Russia, etc., "Bakinets" also tried to cooperate with Azerbaijani diaspora organizations. The Society intended to take initiative in the wide dissemination of information about the Azerbaijani version of the conflict. It made attempts to hold Days of Azerbaijan abroad, but not Baku, in addition to organizing exhibitions of Azerbaijani, rather than Bakuvian artists, etc. The desire to represent "Bakinets" as national, rather than urban, was reflected in the only annual public event held by the Society – the Award Ceremony Humay (the Wing Goddes). This national prize was established in 1993 and awards several categories: "Cinema", "Theater", "Literature", "Science", "Sport", etc. Almost all members of the jury and the prize-winners are ethnic Azerbaijanis.[481] As a result, with the exception of its name, this society has long had nothing to do with the Baku urban community.

"Bakinets" in Berlin: The Isolated Four Walls

The Berlin club "Bakinets" has never cooperated with the society of the same name. Elmira Ashrafova, the head of the club, in turn, tries to maintain contacts with the Azerbaijani embassy, which supports diaspora organizations in Germany. The embassy staff took an active part in the first evening of the club. The difference with the "Bakinets" was obvious to the leaders of the clubs of Leningraders and Odessites, who are not supported by either Russian or Ukrainian embassies. "Of course, a lot of Azerbaijanis attended the first meeting of the Baku club," says Leonid Berezin, "Representatives of

[481]See for example: The Award Ceremony Humay 2012 was held in Baku, https://www.trend.az/life/culture/2019555.html
The National Award "Humay" went to the new hands, http://azerbaijanfilm.az/novosti/1752-nacionalnaya-premiya-humay-ushla-v-novye-ruki.html

the embassy, consulate and other cities. In general, everything was oriental. The event, the opening, everything was awesome".[482] According to Ashrafova:

> "The opening was triumphal. I advertised everywhere, in all Russian editions. It all costs money, so it was necessary to make a statement. It had been attended by so many people from Leipzig, Dresden. And then, somehow fewer and fewer. Well, one cannot every time come from Leipzig, for example. Many of them are working and then age is beginning to tell".[483]

In the years following the opening, the club rarely received support from the embassy, and only if the topic of the event was focused on Azerbaijan and its national culture. On the whole, however, the club was created and operates within the framework of the ZWST and the Jewish community.

> "*Honestly speaking, I had this idea for a long time*", says Elmira Ashrafova, "*When I came here to work, there were clubs, let's say kind of fellow townsmen organizations. The club Kiev, Leningraders. [...]And in this sense, it was somehow frustrating. What, after all, is Kiev or Leningrad, how are they better than Baku?! With this idea, I went to the chief [head of the ZWST Joseph Vardi] [...] He said: 'Please. If you manage to open up virgin lands, please'. Well, that's how it appeared, as a musical and literary club.*" (Elmira Ashrafova, woman, 63 years old, Berlin 2010)

The club is represented by its founders and activists as an intellectual space within which Russian-speaking Bakuvians can share their memories and get information about Jewish tradition and history. There are always a lot of ethnic Azerbaijanis among the visitors of the club. Its head is from a mixed family. "I am a product of two cultures – Jewish and Azerbaijani", Ashrafova likes to repeat. In the club, one can meet Russians and Ukrainians, but it is represented, first of all, as Jewish. Contact with the Azerbaijani embassy and the loyal attitude toward present Baku, as the capital of the nation state, give a specific character to the club's theme. There are no and cannot be ethnic Armenians among its members. Publicly, it is only acceptable to support the Azerbaijani perspective on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Still, the nationalization touched this club to a lesser degree.

[482]Leonid Berezin, man, 87 years old, the first chairman of the Club of Leningraders, Berlin, April 2016
[483]Informal conversation with Ashrafova. May 2014, Berlin. S.Huseynova, Field Notes.

"*The themes of our club are very diverse. We exist one year. ... We even have celebrated Novruz Bayram*[484] [...] *On the history of Azerbaijan, on the Jewish history. We opened on September 14* [2006], *the first event dedicated to the historical roots of the Jews of Azerbaijan. Then there was such a topic as the life of the Jews in today's Baku. In November, it was the parallel between the Talmud and Avesta.* [...] *In December, the Jewish doctors and their role in public life in Baku. It was a great role. Even in the first Musavat republic, the Minister of health was a Jew.* [...] *In January we had* [the topic of] *Germans in the pages of Azerbaijan history. It is a well-known fact that Germans were in Kirovabad, in Shamkhor.... In February, the traditional family system of the Caucasian Jews. In March, we celebrated the Novruz Bayram* [...] *In June, it was the event titled 'The story of my people in the fate of my family'. That is, they talked about a joint Israeli, Russian and American project. It was about the fact that almost every Jewish family suffered from fascism, and there is still a trace. Besides the trace, we were talking about the fact that every migrant Jewish family has the same things in their homes here. The same dishes, the same china, the same matreshkas. All what we have kept of that life, and here we create our own isolated four walls, in which we are protected and continue to live the same life. Every morning we are going to work, coming back home, that is all! The TV in Russian is on, or the "LeaderTV"*[485]*, and sometimes, even without watching, you are trying to relax somehow.* [...] *Then on November 7, we had an anniversary celebration of the club Bakinets".* (Elmira Ashrafova, woman, 60 years old, Berlin, November 2007)

During the regular gatherings, the club itself, in turn, becomes *four walls* (another metaphor for *the island*) in which Russian-speaking visitors to the club continue to live the same life. The evenings are an opportunity to discuss the radical transformation of Baku. In conversations between visitors of the club, there are often statements that the Baku, in which they were born and lived their best years, no longer exists. There are also topics devoted to the hometown, for example, in January 2013, the description of an evening promoted: "Baku is the pearl of the Caucasus: yesterday, today, tomorrow. Documentary film, oriental dishes, and melodies of our youth are waiting for you". This

[484]One of the main national holidays in Azerbaijan
[485]Azerbaijan TV Channel

was an event when, according to Appadurai, "moving images meet de-territorialized viewers" (2005: 3-4).

In the club “Bakinets”, as in other clubs, there are often collective screenings and discussions of documentary films. This time, the film was made up of various videos taken from the Internet. The first plot was dedicated to the “Baku of 2030”. It was an advertisement prepared by the Heydar Aliyev Foundation, dedicated to showcasing how the city is supposed to look by 2030. The images were accompanied by modern music. The audience was shown a city of skyscrapers, reminiscent of modern Dubai and almost without any national color. The next plot demonstrated the results of the large-scale reconstructions in Baku: new buildings, new hotels, the Heydar Aliyev Foundation's building, etc. The club leader, confusing the imaginary city of 2030 with the modern one, accompanied the film with meaningful phrases: “*You see, one cannot understand is this Dubai or not”; “Yes, this is the modern Baku, although I did not see that when I was there for the last time four years ago*”, etc.

Next came a film with plot dedicated to the old Baku, the city that existed in the 1950-70s. “That is our city”, commented Ashrafova, “but it does not exist anymore.” The crowd met this commentary with understanding and sympathy. The video was accompanied by the songs of the Soviet period: “*In this city of bright lights*” (Rashid Behbudov), “*Girls of Baku*” (the ensemble “Gaya”), and well-known chanson to all who were gathered, “*A Plane Baku-Moscow*” (*Samolet Baku-Moskva* performed by the famous chansonnier in the Soviet years Boka-Boris Davidyan). The visual footage of the city of the past was followed by the video of Vyacheslav Sapunov with the self-explanatory title "Baku that does not exist”.[486] He concludes with a significant phrase: “We believe that the new Baku will be a beautiful city. But we will never forget Baku of our childhood”. The guests of the evening discussed all the videos very vividly, and the images of the old city aroused a special interest. Many participants tried to enter heated debates about the names of streets, squares, schools, etc. After the screening, Ashrafova once again took the floor: “Let's drink to our Baku! Let's drink to the city of our childhood, let's drink to the new Baku. To their [the residents of Baku] prosperity, so they will be happy. And I want us to be good here. God willing!” After the toast, the speech abruptly changed to the events of January 1990.

[486]The blog of well-known Baku public intellectual and journalist Vachaslav Sapunov. “Baku, kotorogo net”, https://sapunov.livejournal.com/969179.html?nc=17

"*Unfortunately, January is known to Bakintsy as the Black January of 1990. This day made history in Azerbaijan, not as a peaceful day. It broke with a roar of guns. It was the day when the troops entered Baku. As usual, ordinary people suffered. There were a lot of victims. In Baku in the Kirov Park, there is an alley of victims.* [...] *And as Gorbachev and his wife were in America, they met with the Armenian diaspora. And at the first moment, foolishly they went on TV. Then they came to their senses and cut them out. We all watched and were horrified, how it was possible. They were invited by the Armenian Diaspora, which hung a map of Great Armenia from Sea to Sea. They had the* idée fixe*. I understand the history, but such a state from Sea to Sea under this name is not familiar to me.* [...] *I'm a very tolerant person. I am a product of two cultures, even three. Jewish, Azerbaijani and Russian cultures.* [...]. *And therefore my club is called 'Bakinets' because such a nationality Bakinets (!) was formed. No one was interested in what nationality you really were. We never asked this question. In 2nd or 3d grade, I do not remember, it was necessary to fill out some forms and when it came to the nationality* [...] *our teacher Lyudmila Ivanovna approached everyone. What should we write? We did not know. So she went up to each, gave us a pat on the back and said: 'You write an Azerbaijani, and you write a Russian, and you write a Jew.' That's how we grew up in such a tolerant atmosphere. By the beginning of the 20th century, in Baku, it was 30% of Azerbaijanis. 70% were of other nationalities. It was Russians, it was Jews, it* [hesitated, as Armenians, prompted L. from the hall]. *Armenians, Georgians, all Caucasian nationalities.* [...] *Although we all live well here, we do watch such films. We all long for our old homeland. Let's be honest, Germany will never be our homeland. Maybe our grandchildren, if they are not driven from here. But even for our children* [it will not be a homeland]. *Still, we speak Russian, we think Russian. We are a product of Russian-Soviet culture"* (Elmira Ashrafova, Berlin, January 2013).

Ashrafova interrupted her reflections and suggested switching to the music of their youth and oriental food. A female journalist, about forty years old, sat down at our table. "Yes, of course, it's beautiful, she said, "but it's not our city anymore. One day I went downtown from Narimanov Avenue, and suddenly stopped and I was scared. I suddenly realized that I did not recognize the city". If those gathered tried to take a look at the urban community, to which they still belong themselves, perhaps, with surprise,

they would have thought that it was no longer recognizable. This community still exists in a transnational form. However, the ethnic segmentation deepens every year, and the metaphor of nation, Bakintsy, refers to the golden age of the community, irretrievably belonged to the past.

Announcement board at the Jewish Community in Berlin. The Club Bakinets invites to gathering dedicated to 70th anniversary of Israel and 100th anniversary of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic.Berlin, May 2018. Photo by S. Huseynova

CONCLUSION

In 1920 a young and still little-known Konstantin Paustovsky made desperate efforts to "not succumb from exhaustion" in a cold, hungry and fairly depopulated Odessa. A school friend introduced the writer to one of the ancestors of the "fearless cheat Ostap Bender," the Odessan reporter Blumkis (who preferred to be called Torelli). In one of his conversations with Blumkis-Torelli, Paustovsky remarked that "life can flow in an orderly way in the whole world, but as for Odessa, it cannot be vouched for." He argued that Odessa is an eccentric city where everything is possible, including street battles over Viennese chairs" (Paustovsky 2013: 9, 38-39).

Contemporary Odessites are often inclined to assert that it's been long since that voracious and dashing Odessa existed. Its architectural heritage is under threat of extinction, and the Odessites themselves are *thinly spread throughout the world*. In turn, many Petersburgers and Bakuvians tend to talk about their native cities in the categories of the past. The more pride they experience for the past of their cities, the less optimism they feel in relation to their future. The current state of affairs is often described in a pessimistic spirit. Odessa, St Petersburg and Baku are rapidly changing, and not for the better. Urban communities lose their domineering positions and ability to influence the preservation of the cultural landscape and habitual life styles. There is less and less hope for maintaining the social conditions necessary for the reproduction of the "true" Odessites, Petersburgers and Bakuvians out of the new generations of their fellow townspeople.

What are the prospects for reproduction of these urban communities? How long of a lifetime is destined for these city clubs and transnational networks? Is it possible to assert that the process of transnationalization of these urban communities has begun and will end with the generation of people who left their cities in large numbers in the late 1980s - and throughout the 1990s? Or, in other words, what will happen to cities and to imaginary urban communities? The search for regularities is a difficult task, and any forecast is a thankless job. But if we consider the subject of their imaginary future as an analytical framework, a number of deductions and conclusions to this study can be made. It makes sense to turn again to the two main story lines which served the analysis of the collected field materials; first, to the *effect of the place* or to the *genius loci* of St

Petersburg, Odessa and Baku, and, secondly, to the specificity of imagined urban communities.

Rolf Lindner, referring to the concept of the *habitus* of cities, argues that it does not necessarily have to come to be by having a long life. In cases of extreme turning points, "historically preceding formations are superseded and, as it were, lost in oblivion. On the other hand, we can note processes that are remarkably "long-lasting", in which an order which is inherently a legacy of history remains in effect. The image of the city in such cases is determined by economic and social history, which in modern times, perhaps, does not have an affect everywhere, but only on individual points, yet still continues to impose its imprint on the city" (Lindner 2008: 89). Despite the fact that this study was not devoted to the habitus of cities, but to urban habituses of Odessites, Petersburgers and Bakuvians, Lindner's observation can be extremely useful.

You can find both extreme turning points and the continuing influence of history in the biographies of all three cities. Most of the turning points took place in the twentieth century (revolution, war, disintegration of the USSR). It would seem that they are given considerable attention in urban discourses and narratives. However, the history of cities is regarded as continuous, and the turning points are interpreted as temporary difficulties in retrospect. In the context of dominant retrospective discourses and myths, as if phoenixes rising from ashes, cities and their communities are constantly reviving and preserving continuity from the past to the present and the future. This is facilitated by the genius of the place, the uniqueness of socio-cultural urban landscapes, which are seemingly intended by the history itself for the production of original urban communities. A number of recognizable images greatly loaded with meanings appear immediately when the words Odessite, a Petersburger or a Bakuvian are uttered, surrounding the urban communities with a special aura.

For example, a roster of well-recognized characters, from the creator of St Petersburg - Peter the Great to the Leningrad poets and writers Brodsky and Dovlatov, or from the founding fathers of Odessa - de Ribas and Richelieu to the comedian and writer Zhvanetskiy. In the context of the essentialist connotations that permeate urban discourses and narratives, a direct link and continuity is established between the contemporaries and fellow townspeople of centuries past. Outstanding poets, writers or scientists who were born and lived in these cities confirm, by their very existence, the myths of their cities' uniqueness. They support the belief that the air and soil of these cities were intended for the production of talents by history itself. Baku is no competitor for St Petersburg and Odessa. Baku's urban talents are for the most part little known outside the city. However,

an even greater set of metaphors and representations arises when uttering the names of the cities themselves. And in this case, Baku also has something to offer - in the recent past it was "the most international city", its soil impregnated with oil, it manages to unite in itself the seemingly incompatible "East" and "West", etc.

Architectural landscapes are doomed to incur constant losses. But all these cities, as culturally coded spaces, have their cumulative texture, which was, is and will remain their inalienable resource. Therefore, all three cities in the foreseeable future will retain the right to maintain and produce, though to different degrees, their myths and discourses of uniqueness and originality. St Petersburg - the "open-air museum" – is obviously best positioned for this as the city of Peter and Catherine the Great, Pushkin and Dostoyevsky, Akhmatova and Brodsky, and even Putin. The so-called North Palmyra, with its diverse, rich historical and cultural heritage, despite all the losses, will retain the status of Russia's second capital. The rehabilitation of the imperial past and the relevance of the memory of the events of the Second World War (the city-hero which survived the Blockade) in modern politics allow us to constantly nourish the discourses and myths of uniqueness. Odessa was less fortunate. The city is losing a great number of its many architectural monuments. Post-Soviet nationalization and the conflict with Russia do not work well for the rehabilitation of its imperial heritage, associated with the "golden age" in the history of the so-called Pearl by the Sea. However, it is still the city of Catherine the Great and Potemkin, de Ribas and Richelieu, Pushkin and Babel. As compensation for its losses, Odessa remains the most important Ukrainian port city on the Black Sea. The least fortune fell on Baku's Russian-speaking community. One can observe yet another extreme turning point in the radical reconstruction of the architectural landscape along with the destruction of many places of memory important for members of the community. In this situation, the discourses of succession are replaced by the images of the new Baku - the second Dubai, which has little connection with the city as a site of memory preserved in the memories of many Bakuvians. Now a new Baku discourse and myth are being constructed, within which the imagined Baku community of the post-war years might not find a suitable niche.

Thus, too various degrees, the discourses and myths of the uniqueness (genius loci) of cities retain their influence and one can expect that St Petersburg, Odessa and Baku will continue to produce original local imagined communities. Some features of urban habitus will persist, due to, among others, the fact that the previous generations of urban intellectuals had designed ideal images (types) of St Petersburg, Odessa and Baku. As always, the urban habitus will acquire new elements. But no matter how visibly the

habitus of the city dwellers changes over time, it is unlikely that these changes will lead to the destruction of its communities. Communities will change, adapting to the transformations of place and time, as they have many times before. Behavior and lifestyles of Petersburgers can and must differ significantly throughout the pre-revolutionary era of classes to the years when they transformed into Leningraders and the modern city dwellers of today. What is more, the community itself cannot but be internally heterogeneous. However, within the framework of urban discourse and myth all the embodiments of a Petersburger are homogenized and fall in one line of continuity. Therefore, in the case of Petersburgers and Odessites, the discourses of continuity and ideal types of city habituses will remain salient it the times to come. The prevalence of their influence is manifested in the creation of branched transnational city clubs and their specific activities. The similarity of functions and the roles of city clubs in St Petersburg and Odessa of today essentially distinguish them from the Bakinets association. Despite mass emigration and the influx of new residents into their cities, "real" Petersburgers and Odessites retain the power to construct a city discourse. They still dominate the public space and they hold on to the right to determine what their cities and communities were and should be. This thesis is confirmed in that the World Club of Odessites and the World Club of Petersburgers, whose activities are aimed at maintaining the myth of the genius loci of their cities, are supported by the city authorities and, quite often, the business community. The circumstances are radically different in the case of the Bakinets International Society. Baku is being reconstructed as the capital of a national state and there is no interest in producing locality in today's context of dominant nationalizing nationalism. As a result, "Bakinets" does not receive any serious support from the city authorities and its activity has long been nominal.

As for urban clubs created by emigrants, they have already seen their heyday. The first generation of emigrants is rapidly aging. Their children and, especially, grandchildren are much less connected in their memories with the cities of exodus, and most often do not share their parents' interest in developing or maintaining the clubs. Nevertheless, many of the clubs might still have a long and active life, for instance, the clubs of Odessites in Russia, where there are more emigrants and many middle-aged people among them. Most clubs in the US, Canada or Germany are unlikely to long outlive their founders and activists. Alternatively, they may be replaced by other forms of self-organization.

Is it possible to concurrently argue that the process of transnationalization of urban communities will conclude in tandem with the clubs' demise? Of course, these clubs are only the tip of the iceberg, which is a wide and branched transnational network of

Petersburgers, Odessites and Bakuvians, who unite through all sorts of forums, social groups, Internet sites, electronic communications, media, and more. Of course, the fewer emigrants, the less branched and functional these networks will be. A lot depends on the political and economic events in Russia, Ukraine and Azerbaijan and how they will influence St Petersburg, Odessa and Baku. It cannot be ruled out that Blumkis-Torelli was right when he asserted that *one cannot vouch for the orderly course of life* when it comes to Odessa (and we will add St Petersburg and Baku). A new wave of mass emigration is possible. However, despite the apparent lack of the *orderly* in the lives of these cities, one fact remains beyond doubt. All three cities were, are and will remain, in the words of Arjun Appadurai, *the centers of production of locality in the global world.*

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